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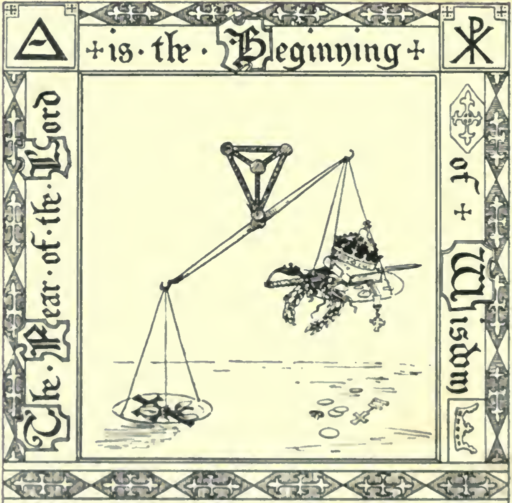
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BY

THOMAS GUTHRIE, D. D.,

AUTHOR OF "THE GOSPEL IN EZEKIEL," "THE CITY, ITS SINS AND SORROWS,"
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AS AN EXPRESSION OF RESPECT

FOR

SERVICES RENDERED TO THE RELIGIOUS AND PUBLIC INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY,

AND OF

GRATITUDE FOR HIS CONSTANT FRIENDSHIP TO

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The Inheritance.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.—COLOSSIANS i. 12.

ONE thing is often set against another in the experience of the Christian; and also in the every-day procedure of the providence of God. So fared it with Jacob that night he slept in Bethel. A stone was his pillow, and the cold hard ground his bed; yet, while sleep sealed his eyelids, he had God himself to guard his low-laid head, and dreams such as seldom bless a couch of down. A ladder rose before him in the vision of the night. It rested on earth, and reached to the stars. And forming a highway for a multitude of angels, who ascended and descended in two dazzling streams of light it stood there the bright sign of a redemption which has restored the intercourse between earth and heaven, and opened a path for our return to God.

Now, the scheme of salvation, of which that ladder was a glorious emblem, may be traversed in either of these two ways. In studying it, we may descend by the steps that lead from the cause to the consummation, or, taking the opposite course, we may rise from the consummation to the cause. So—as a matter sometimes of taste, sometimes of judgment—men do in other departments of study. The geographer for example, may follow a river from the lone mountain-tops where its waters spring, down into the glen, into which, eager to leave sterility behind, it leaps with a joyous bound; and from thence, after resting awhile in black, deep, swirling pool, resumes its way, here spreading itself out in glassy lake, or there winding like a silver serpent through flowery meadows; until forcing a passage through some rocky gorge, it sweeps out into the plain, to pursue, 'mid shady woods and by lordly tower, through corn-fields, by smiling villages and busy towns, a course that, like the life of man, grows calmer as it nears its end. Or, starting from the sea-beach, he may trace the river upwards; till, passing town and church, tower and mill, scattered hamlet and solitary shepherd's cot, in some mossy well, where the wild deer drink, or mountain rock beneath the eagle's nest, he finds the place of its birth. The botanist, too, who describes a tree, may begin with its fruit; and from this, whether husky shell, or rugged cone, or clustering berry, he may pass to the flower; from that to the buds; from those to the branches; from the branches to the stem; and from the stem into the ground, where he lays bare the wide-spread roots, on which—as states depend upon the humbler classes for power, wealth, and worth—the tree depends both for nourishment and support. Or, reversing the plan, with equal justice to his subject, and advantage to his pupils, he may begin at the root and end with the fruit.

The inspired writers, in setting forth salvation, adopt sometimes the one course, and sometimes the other. With Paul, for instance, the subject of heaven now introduces Christ, and now from Christ, the Apostle turns to expatiate on the joys of heaven. Here, as on an angel's wing that sheds light on every step, we see him ascending, and there descending the ladder. Taking flight from the cross, he soars upward to the crown; and now, like an eagle sweeping down from the bosom of a golden cloud, he leaves the throne of the Redeemer to alight on the heights of Calvary. As an example of the ascending method, we have that well-known passage in his epistle to the Romans—"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren: moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." There we pass from the root to the fruit, from the cause, step by step, to its effects; here again, Paul guides us upward along the stream of blessings to their perennial fountain. He first shows the precious gift, and then reveals the gracious giver; the purchase first, and afterwards the divine Purchaser. From the crown of glory, flashing on the brow of a Magdalene, he turns our dazzled eyes to another crown, a trophy hung upon a cross; a wreath of thorns, armed with long sharp spikes—each, in place of a pearly gem, tipped with a drop of blood. He first introduces us to heaven as our inalienable heritage, and then to the throne and person of him who won heaven for us. He conducts us up to Jesus, that we may fall at his feet with adoring gratitude, and join in spirit the saintly throng who dwell in the full fruition of his presence, and praise him throughout eternity.

The words of my text, and those also of the verse which follows it, are introductory to a sublime description of Jesus Christ—a picture to which, after considering these preliminary verses, we intend to draw your attention. To the eye both of saints and sinners it presents a noble subject. If his great forerunner felt himself unworthy even to loose the latchet of his shoes, how unworthy are these hands to sustain a theme so sacred and sublime. May he who ordaineth strength "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings," without whose aid the strongest are weak, and by whose help the weakest are strong, fulfil among us his own great and gracious promise—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me!"

Turning your attention, meanwhile, to the matter of these introductory verses, I remark—

I. Heaven is an Inheritance.

Examples, at once of pride and poverty—how prone are men to attach importance to their own works, and to seek at least some shining points of goodness in them—like grains of gold in a mass of rock! We are loth to believe that those things for which others esteem and love, and praise us, and even, perhaps, crown our brows with laurel, apart from Christ, have no merit; but appear in the sight of the holy and heart-searching God as, to use a Bible phrase, "filthy rags." It is not easy to bring human pride, no, nor human reason, to admit that; to believe that the loveliest, the purest, the most virtuous of womankind, a mother's pride and a household's honor, must be saved, as the vilest outcast is saved—as a brand plucked out of the fire, or he of whom God said, "Take away the filthy garments from him. Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."

These feelings arise in part, perhaps, from a secret suspicion, that, if our works be entirely destitute of merit, they must at the same time disincline God to save us, and disqualify us for being saved. But how base, unscriptural, God-dishonoring is this fear! One would think that the parable of the prodigal had been invented to refute it. There, recognizing him from afar, God, under the emblem of an earthly father, runs to embrace his son, all foul and ragged as he is; he holds him in his arms; he drowns his confession in this great cry of joy, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Nature herself proves it false by every little child who lifts its hands and prayer to God as "Our Father which art in heaven." What idea has he formed of God who expects less of him than he would expect of any earthly mother? Let her be a queen. She is a mother; and under the impulse of feelings that reign alike in palaces and in cottages, how would that woman spring from her throne to embrace a lost babe; and, weeping tears of joy, press it to her jewelled bosom, though plucked from the foulest ditch, and wrapped in tainted rags? He knows little of human nature, fallen as it is, who fancies any mother turning from the plaintive cry and imploring arms of her offspring because, forsooth, it was restored to her in loathsome attire. And he is still more ignorant of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" who fancies that, unless man can make out some merit, he will receive no mercy. Blessed be his name, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Volumes of theology have been written, and long controversies have waxed hot, about the question—

whether heaven is, or is not, in part, the reward of our own good works? Now it appears to me that there is one word in my text, whose voice authoritatively and summarily settles that matter; and would have always settled it, had not men's hearts been fired with angry passions, and their ears confused with the din of battle. That word is—*inheritance.* What is inheritance? The pay of a soldier is not inheritance; neither are the fees of a lawyer or of a physician; nor the gains of trade; nor the wages of labor. Rewards of toil or skill, these are earned by the hands that receive them. What is inherited, on the other hand, may be the property of a new-born babe; and so you may see the coronet, which was won by the stout arm of valor, and first blazoned on a battered shield, standing above the cradle of a wailing infant. True, the ample estate, the noble rank, the hereditary honors were won. But they that won them are long dead; "their swords are rust, their bodies dust;" and underneath tattered banners, once borne before them in bloody fight, but now hung high in the house of God, the grim old barons sleep in their marble tombs. The rewards of their prowess and patriotism have descended to their successors; who, holding these, enjoy honors and estates, which we do not grudge them, but which their wealth never bought, and their courage never won.

Thus the saints hold heaven. In the terms of a court of law, it is theirs, not by conquest, but by heritage. Won by another arm than theirs, it presents the strongest imaginable contrast to the spectacle seen in England's palace that day when the king demanded to know of his assembled nobles, by what title they held their lands? "What title?" At the rash question a hundred swords leapt from their scabbards. Advancing on the alarmed monarch—"By these," they replied, "we won, and by these we will keep them." How different the scene which heaven presents! All eyes are fixed on Jesus; every look is love; gratitude glows in every bosom, and swells in every song; now with golden harps they sound the Saviour's praise; and now, descending from their thrones to do him homage, they cast their crowns in one glittering heap at the feet which were nailed on Calvary. Look there, and learn in whose name to seek salvation, and through whose merits to hope for it. For the faith of earth is just a reflection of the fervors of heaven: this the language of both—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

II. Heaven is a heritage of free grace. We have no such legal claim to heavenly glory as may be established to some earthly inheritance. In consequence of a distant relationship, in those sudden turns of the wheel of fortune, which—displaying the providence of Him who abases the proud and exalts the humble—throw one family into the dust, and another into the possession of unexpected riches, the heir of noble titles and broad lands has started up from the deepest obscurity. And so I have seen a man come into a court of law, and, producing some old moth-eaten Bible, with its time-worn record of births, and marriages, and deaths, all long ago forgotten, or some damp, musty parchment, or some inscription copied from a burial-stone, which the dispute has redeemed from decay and rank church-yard weeds, lay a firm hand on estates and honors won long centuries ago. Such strange events have happened. Heirs have entered on the property of those between whom and them there existed no acquaintanceship, nor friendship, nor fellowship; for whom, in fact, they entertained no regard while they lived, and whose memory they neither cherish in warm hearts, nor preserve in cold brass or marble. But it is by no such obscure connection or remote relationship, that "the inheritance of the saints in light" becomes ours. We are constituted its heirs by virtue of sonship; we, who were once afar off—the seed of the serpent, the children of the devil, the children of wrath even as others—becoming sons by that act of grace, which has led many to exclaim with John, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Thus heaven, presenting itself to us in one of its most engaging aspects, is not only an inheritance, but a home. Oh! how sweet that word! What beautiful and tender associations cluster thick around it! Compared with it, house, mansion, palace, are cold heartless terms. But home! that word quickens the pulse, warms the heart, stirs the soul to its depths, makes age feel young again, rouses apathy into energy, sustains the sailor on his midnight watch, inspires the soldier with courage on the field of battle, and imparts patient endurance to the worn-down sons of toil! The thought of it has proved a sevenfold shield to virtue; the very name of it has been a spell to call back the wanderer from the paths of vice; and, far away, where myrtles bloom and palm trees wave, and the ocean sleeps upon coral strands, to the exile's fond fancy it clothes the naked rock or stormy shore, or barren moor, or wild Highland mountain, with charms he weeps to think of, and longs once more to see. Grace sanctifies these lovely affections, and imparts a sacredness to the homes of earth by making them types of heaven. As a home the believer delights to think of it. Thus when, lately bending over a dying saint, and expressing our sorrow to see him laid so low, with the radiant countenance rather of one who had just left heaven, than of one about to enter it, he raised and clasped his hands, and exclaimed in ecstasy, "*I am going home.*" Happy the family of which God is the father, Jesus the elder brother, and all the "saints in light" are brethren—brethren born of one Spirit; nursed at the full breast of the same promises; trained in the same high school of heavenly discipline; seated at the same table; and gathered all where the innocent loves of earth are not quenched, but purified; not destroyed, but refined! To that family circle every accession forms a subject of gratitude and praise; and every new-comer receives such welcome as a mother, while she falls on his manly breast, gives her son, or as sisters, locked in his arms, with theirs entwined around him, give the brother whom they have got safe back from wreck and storm, or the bloody fields of war. So when, on returning home after weary journeys and a tedious absence, we have found that the whole household was moved, and that all, down even to the tottering babe, with outstretched hands, and beaming faces, and joyful welcomes, were at the door to meet us, we have thought, it shall be thus at the gates of glory. What a meeting there of parents and children, brothers and sisters, and death-divided friends! What mutual gratulations! What overflowing joy! And, when they have led our spirit up through the long line of loving angels to the throne, what happiness to see Jesus, and get our warmest welcome from the lips of him who redeemed us by his blood, and, in the agonies of his cross, suffered for us more than a mother's pangs—"the travail of his soul."

Heir of grace! thy estate lies there. Child of God! thy Father, and Saviour, and brethren, and sisters, are there. Pilgrim to Sion, be ever pressing on and ever looking up! thy true home is there; a home above these blue skies, above sun and stars; a sweet, saintly, glorious home—whose rest shall be all the sweeter for the pelting of the storm, thy rugged path, the sorrows and the tears of earth—and whose light shall be all the brighter for that "valley of the shadow of death," from which thou shalt pass into the blaze of everlasting day. Believer! I congratulate thee on thy prospects. Lift up thy cast-down head; let thy port, man, be worthy of thy coming fortunes. Bear thyself as one who shall wear a holy crown; as one who, however humble thy present lot, is training for the highest society. Cultivate the temper, and acquire the manners, and learn the language of heaven; nor let the wealth or poverty, the joys or sorrows, the shame or honors of thy earthly state, ever make thee forget "the inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

III. The heirs of heaven require to be made meet for the inheritance.

I knew a man who had amassed great wealth, but had no children to inherit it. He lost the opportunity, which one would think good men would more frequently embrace, of leaving Christ his heir, and bequeathing to the cause of religion what he could not carry away. Smitten, however, with the vain and strange propensity to found a house, or make a family, as it is called, he left his riches to a distant relative. His successor found himself suddenly raised from poverty to affluence, and thrown into a position which he had not been trained to fill. He was cast into the society of those to whose tastes, and habits, and accomplishments he was an utter and an awkward stranger. Did many envy this child of fortune? They might have spared their envy. Left in his original obscurity he had been a happy peasant, whistling his way home from the plough to a thatch-roofed cottage, or on winter nights, and around the blazing faggots, laughing loud and merry among unpolished boors. Child of misfortune! he buried his happiness in the grave of his benefactor. Neither qualified by nature, nor fitted by education, for his position, he was separated from his old, only to be despised by his new associates. And how bitterly was he disappointed to find, that, in exchanging poverty for opulence, daily toil for luxurious indolence, humble friends for more distinguished companions, a hard bed for one of down, this turn in his fortunes had flung him on a couch, not of roses, but of thorns! In his case, the hopes of the living and the intentions of the dead were alike frustrated. The prize had proved a blank; a necessary result of this fatal oversight, that the heir had not been made meet for the inheritance.

Is such training needful for an earthly estate? How much more for the "inheritance of the saints in light!" "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No change to a condition however lofty—no elevation from the lowest obscurity to the highest honor, from abject poverty to the greatest affluence, adequately represents the difference between the state of sin in which grace finds us, and the state of glory to which it raises us. The most ignorant and debased of our city outcasts, the most wretched and loathsome wanderer of these streets, is not so unfit to be received into the holy bosom of a Christian family, as you are, by nature, to be received into the kingdom of heaven. A sinner there were more out of place than a ragged beggar in a royal palace, where, all gazing at his appearance with astonishment, and shrinking back from his defiling touch, he rudely thrusts himself within the brilliant circle. Compared with the difference between a man, as grace finds him, and heaven gets him, how feeble are all earthly distinctions! They sink into nothing. So unheavenly, in truth, is our nature, that unless we were made meet for the inheritance, we were no honor to it, nor were it any happiness to us.

What, for instance, were the most tempting banquet, to one without appetite, sick, loathing the very sight and smell of food? To a man stone-deaf, what the boldest blast of trumpet, the roll of drums, stirring the soldier's soul to deeds of daring valor, or the finest music that ever fell on charmed ear, and seemed to bear the spirit on its waves of sound up to the gates of heaven? Or what, to one stone-blind, a scene to which beauty has lent its charms, and sublimity its grandeur—the valley clad in a many-colored robe of flowers, the gleaming lake, the flashing cascade, the foaming torrent, the dark-climbing forest, the brave trees that cling to the frowning crags, the rocky pinnacles, and, high over all, hoary winter looking down on summer from her throne on the Alps' untrodden snows? Just what heaven would be to man with his ruined nature, his low passions, and his dark guilty conscience. Incapable of appreciating its holy beauties, of enjoying its holy happiness, he would find nothing there to delight his senses. How he would wonder in what its pleasures lay; and, supposing him once there, were there a place of safety out of it, how he would long to be away, and keep his eye on the gate to watch its opening, and escape as from a doleful prison! Such an inheritance were to such a man like the gift of a noble library to a plumed, painted savage. As, ignorant of letters, he stalked from hall to hall amid the wisdom of bygone ages, and rolled his restless eyes over the unappreciated treasures, how he would sigh to be back to his native forests, where he might sit among his tribe at the council-fire, or raise his war-whoop, or hunt down the deer! People talk strangely of going to heaven when they die; but what gratification could it possibly afford a man whose enjoyments are of a sensuous or sensual nature—whose only pleasure lies in the acquisition of worldly objects, or the gratification of brutal appetites? You hope to go to heaven! I hope you will. But, unless your heart is sanctified and renewed, what were heaven to you? an abhorrent vacuum. The day that took you there would end all enjoyment, and throw you, a castaway, upon a solitude more lonely than a desert island. Neither angels nor saints would seek your company, nor would you seek theirs. Unable to join in their hallowed employments, to sympathise with, or even to understand their holy joys, you would feel more desolate in heaven than we have done in the heart of a great city, without one friend, jostled by crowds, but crowds who spoke a language we did not understand, and were aliens alike in dress and manners, in language, blood, and faith.

It is the curse of vice, that, where its desires outlive the power of gratification, or are denied the opportunity of indulgence, they become a punishment and a torment. Denied all opportunity of indulgence, what would a drunkard do in heaven? Or a glutton? Or a voluptuary? Or an ambitious man? Or a worldling? one whose soul lies buried in a heap of gold? Or she, who, neglecting quite as much the noble purposes of her being, flits, life through, a painted butterfly, from flower to flower of pleasure, and wastes the day of grace in the idolatry and adornment of a form which death shall change into utter loathsomeness, and the grave into a heap of dust? These would hear no sounds of ecstasy, would see no brightness, would smell no perfumes, in paradise. But, weeping and wringing their hands, they would wander up and down the golden streets to bewail their death, crying—"The days have come in which we have no pleasure in them." On that eternal Sabbath—from which nor fields, nor news, nor business would afford escape—what would they do, who hear no music in church bells, and say of holy services, "When will they be over?" Oh, the slow, weary march of the hours of never-ending Sabbath devotions! Oh, the painful glare of a never-setting Sabbath sun! Than go down to hell, than perish in the coming storm, they would turn their prow to heaven; but only as the last refuge of a sinking bark—a safe, it may be, but yet a friendless shore. Unlike the happy swallows which David envied, thy altar, O God, is the very last spot where many would choose to build their nests!

Such is by nature the disposition of all of us. "The heart is desperately wicked." "The carnal mind" has an aversion to spiritual duties, and an utter distaste for spiritual enjoyments. Nor is that all the truth. However it may lie concealed, like a worm in the bud, "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Illustrating the familiar adage, "out of sight, out of mind," this feeling may lie dormant so long as our enemy is unseen. But, let him appear, and his presence opens every old wound afresh, and fans the smoldering enmity into flame. Therefore, the heaven that purifies the saint would but exasperate the hatred of the sinner; and the more God's holiness and glory were revealed, the more would this enmity be developed—just as the thicker the dews fall on decaying timber, the faster the timber rots; and the more full the sunshine on a noxious plant, the more pestilent its juices grow. It is not in polar regions, where the day is night, and the showers are snow, and the rivers are moving ice, and slanting sunbeams fall faint and feeble, but in the climes where flowers are fairest, and fruits are sweetest, and fullest sunshine warms the air and lights a cloudless sky, that nature prepares her deadliest poisons. There the snake sounds its ominous rattle, and the venemous cobra lifts her hood. Even so sin, could it strike root in heaven, would grow more rankly, more hating and more hateful than on earth, and man would cast on God an eye of deeper and intenser enmity.

Hence the need of being made, by a change of heart, new creatures in Jesus Christ. Hence, also, the need, which by reason of indwelling and remaining corruption, even God's people daily feel, of getting, with a title to the heavenly inheritance, a greater meetness for it. In other words, you must be sanctified as well as saved. This work, so necessary, as we have seen, in the very nature of things, has been assigned to the Holy Spirit. It was the office of the Son to purchase heaven for the heirs. And it is the office of the Spirit to prepare the heirs for heaven. Thus renewed, purified, and at length wholly sanctified, we shall carry a holy nature to a holy place, and be presented "faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy." But observe, more particularly,

IV. As heaven is the gift of God, our meetness for it is the work of God.

In my text, the apostle calls for thanks unto the Father. For by whatever instruments God executes his work, whether the means he uses to sanctify his people be dead books, or living ministers, be sweet or severe, common or striking providences, the work is not theirs, but his. Owing him, then, no less praise for the Spirit who makes us meet for the inheritance, than for the Son who purchased it, we give thanks to God. The church weaves the three names into one doxology, singing, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

Let me illustrate this point by a reference to the case of Lazarus. On the day when he was raised from the dead, Lazarus had two things to thank Christ for. His gratitude was due for what Jesus did without human instrumentality, and also for what he did by it; both for the "Lazarus come forth!" that rent the grave, and for the "Loose him and let him go!" that rent the grave-clothes; not only for life, but for the liberty without which life had been a doubtful blessing. Doubtful blessing! What enjoyment had there been in life so long as the face-cloth was left on his eyes, and his limbs were bound fast in the cerements of the tomb? He emerges from the grave's black mouth a living, yet a startling, hideous object, from whose appalling form the crowd reels back, and terror-stricken sisters might be excused for shrinking. Shrouded like a corpse, smelling of the noisome grave, with the yellow linen muffling eyes and mouth, every door had been shut against him, and the streets of Bethany cleared of flying crowds by such a frightful apparition. Who would have sat beside him at the feast? Who would have worshiped with him in the synagogue? A public terror, shunned by his dearest friends, to him life had been no boon; but a burden—a heavy load from which he had sought relief, where many a weary one has found it, in the deep oblivion of the tomb. Had Christ done no more than bid Lazarus live, I can fancy his unhappy friend imploring him to resume the gift, saying, Take it back; let me return to the quiet grave; the dead will not shun me; and I shall say to corruption, "Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister."

In these circumstances, the conduct of our Lord illustrates that grace which, in whomsoever it begins a good work, will carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus. Pointing to Lazarus—who was, perhaps, endeavoring at that moment, like a newly-awakened sinner, to fling off his shroud, and be free—he addresses the spectators, saying, "Loose him, and let him go!" And thus God deals with renewed souls. Liberty follows life. To His Holy Spirit, and, in a subordinate sense, to providence in its dealings, to ministers in the pulpit, to parents, teachers, and all other human instruments, he says, Undo the bonds of sin—loose them, and let them go!

Now, to bring the subject home, have we not merely fancied, but have we felt, have we solid scriptural ground for believing, that the same spirit-freeing words have been spoken of us? Have we been freed from habits that were to us as grave-clothes? And, emancipated from passions which once enslaved us, are we now, at least in some measure, doing what David undertook, when he said, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart?" In growing holiness—in heavenly desires that, flame-like, shoot upward to the skies—in godly resolutions that aim at, if they do not always attain, a lofty mark—"in the lust of the flesh," and the "pride of life," nailed to a cross where, if not yet dead, they are dying daily—in holy sorrows that, like a summer cloud, while they discharge their burden in tears, are spanned by a bow of hope—in longings that aspire after a purer state and a better land—in these things have you at once the pledge of heaven and the meetness for it? If so, "this is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." As delightful as marvelous! What joy, what peace should it impart to the hearts of those who, feeling themselves less than the least of God's mercies, unworthy of a crust of bread or of a cup of water, hail in these the bright tokens of a blood-bought crown—that coming event which casts its shadow before!

But if, without this meetness, you are indulging the hope that, when you die, you will succeed to the inheritance—ah! how shall the event, the dreadful reality, undeceive you! Ponder these words, I pray you, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord," "Without are dogs," "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Let no man delude himself; or believe that cunning devil, who—unlike the ugly toad that, seated squat by the ear of Eve, filled her troubled mind with horrid dreams—hovers over him in the form of a benignant angel, charming away his fears with "peace, peace, when there is no peace." Believe me, that the only proof that God has chosen us is, that we have chosen him. The distinguishing mark of heirs is some degree of meetness for the heirship. In saints, the spirit is willing even when the flesh is weak; the body lags behind the soul; the affections outrun the feet; and the desires of those who are bound for heaven, are often far on the road before themselves. By these signs thou mayest know thyself. Can you stand that touchstone?

Ere autumn has tinted the woodlands, or the cornfields are falling to the reaper's song, or hoary hill-tops, like gray hairs on an aged head, give warning of winter's approach, I have seen the swallow's brood pruning their feathers, and putting their long wings to the proof; and, though they might return to their nests in the window-eaves, or alight again on the house-tops, they darted away in the direction of sunny lands. Thus they showed that they were birds bound for a foreign clime, and that the period of their migration from the scene of their birth was nigh at hand. Grace also has its prognostics. They are infallible as those of nature. So, when the soul, filled with longings to be gone, is often darting away to glory, and, soaring upward, rises on the wings of faith, till this great world, from her sublime elevation, looks a little thing, God's people know that they have the earnest of the Spirit. These are the pledges of heaven—a sure sign that their "redemption draweth nigh." Such devout feelings afford the most blessed evidence that, with Christ by the helm, and "the wind," that "bloweth where it listeth," in our swelling sails, we are drawing nigh to the land that is afar off; even as the reeds, and leaves, and fruits that float upon the briny waves, as the birds of strange and gorgeous plumage that fly round his ship and alight upon its yards, as the sweet-scented odors which the wind wafts out to sea, assure the weary mariner that, ere long, he shall drop his anchor, and end his voyage in the desired haven.

The Power of Darkness.

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.—COLOSSIANS i. 13.

THE stories of subterranean caves, where brilliant diamonds, thickly studding vaulted roof and fretted walls, supply the place of lamps, are fancies—childhood's fairy-tales. Incredible as it may appear to ignorance, on whose admiring eyes it flashes rays of light, science proves that the diamond is formed of the very same matter as common, dull, black coal. It boasts no native light; and dark in the darkness as the mud or rock where it lies imbedded, it shines if with a beautiful, yet with a borrowed splendor. How meet an emblem of the jewels that adorn the Saviour's crown!

Besides, like many a gem of man and woman kind, the diamond is of humble origin. Its native state is mean. It lies buried in the deep bowels of the earth; and in that condition is almost as unfit to form a graceful ornament, as the stones that pave our highways, as the rudest pebble which ocean, in her play, rolls upon the beach. Unlike many other crystals, it is foul, encrusted with dirt, and inelegant in form—flashing with none of that matchless lustre which makes it afterwards appear more like a fragment struck from star or sun, than a product of this dull, cold world. That it may glow, and sparkle, and burn with many-colored fires, and change into a thing of beauty, it has to undergo a rough, and, had it our sensibilities of nerve and life, a painful process. The lapidary receives it from the miner; nor, till he has ground the stone on his flying wheel, and polished it with its own dust, does it pass into the hands of the jeweller to be set in a golden crown, or become the brightest ornament of female loveliness. Through a corresponding preparation Christ's saints have to go. Are you saved? you have to be sanctified. Are you redeemed? you have to be renewed. You are polluted, and require to be purified; and, as all know who have experienced it, at a great cost of pain and self-denial, sin has to be eradicated—utterly destroyed; in respect of its dominant power, cast out. This fulfils the prayer, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly;" and for this, as forming that meetness for the inheritance, which was the subject of my last address, the saints are now either offering up prayer on earth, or, better far, praise and thanks in heaven.

But as the gem, ere it is polished, must be brought from the mine and its naturally base condition, so, ere those whom Christ has redeemed with his blood can be sanctified by his Spirit, they must be called and converted; they must be brought into a new condition; or, in the words of my text, "delivered from the power of darkness," and "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." This, which is the subject before us now, calls our attention to the greatest of all changes. I say the greatest · one even greater than the marvellous transition which takes place at the instant of death—from dying struggles to the glories of the skies. Because, while heaven is the day of which grace is the dawn; the rich, ripe, fruit of which grace is the lovely flower; the inner shrine of that most glorious temple to which grace forms the approach and outer court,—

in passing from nature to grace you did not pass from a lower to a higher stage of the same condition—from daybreak to sunshine, but from darkest night to dawn of day. Unlike the worm which changes into a winged insect, or the infant who grows up into a stately man, you became, not a more perfect, but "a *new* creature" in Jesus Christ. And with deepest gratitude to Him who, filled with pity, and for "his great love wherewith he loved us," left heaven to save us, let us now consider our original state—"look unto the rock whence we are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we are digged."

I. Look at our state of nature and sin as one of darkness.

In its essential nature, sin is as opposed to holiness as darkness is to light; and as different, therefore, from holiness, as a starless midnight from the blaze of noonday. Our natural state is therefore, because of its sinfulness, represented by the emblem of darkness. How appropriate and how expressive the figure! Hence, in describing the condition of the heathen, those who neither know God, nor Him whom to know is life eternal, the Bible says, The darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. Hence, those ancient prophets who lived in the morning of the church—and in the rosy east, and clouds already touched with gold, saw a sun beneath the horizon hastening to his rise—hailed Jesus as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel. Hence also, inasmuch as he reveals saving truth, redeems from sin, and shines upon the path he himself has opened to heaven, Jesus stood before the multitude, and said, as he raised his hand to the blazing sun, "I am the light of the world."

Jesus! Thy people's shield, thou art also thy people's sun; a shield that never broke in battle, and a sun that never sets in night; the source of all the knowledge that illumes, and of all the love that warms us; with healing, as well as heating virtue in thy beams, thou art "The sun of righteousness with healing in his wings."

To that emblem of our Saviour, so splendid and yet so simple, science imparts additional appropriateness, if the theory be true that accounts for those vast stores of light and heat which we extract from dead dark coal. The coal, which we raise from the bowels of the earth, once grew upon its surface. Some ten or twenty thousand years ago, it formed the giant forests where mighty monsters ranged at will over an unpeopled world. After this rank vegetation had incorporated into its substance these elements of light and heat which the sun poured down from heaven, God, provident of the wants of a race not yet created buried it in the earth; and thus furnished the earth with ample stores of fuel for the future use of man. So, when the sun has set, and the birds have gone to roost, and the stars have come out in the sky, and the door is shut, and the curtains are drawn, and peace and happiness smile on the bright family circle, it is sun-light that shines from the lustres, and sun-heat that glows on the hearth. But whether that speculation of science be true or false, to Jesus we can trace all the light direct or derived, which illuminates the world. Heavenly fountain of the love that warms and the truth that enlightens mankind, he rose like a sun on this cold benighted earth; and will be the centre around which heaven itself shall roll when tides have ceased to flow below, and suns to shine above. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

But, turning from the Saviour to contemplate the sinner, I pray you to observe, that our state by nature is one not merely of darkness, but of double darkness. It is always dark, pitch dark, even at noonday, to the blind; not blazing sun, or shining stars to them. With God "the night shineth as the day," but to the unhappy blind, "He maketh the day dark with night." Yet strong as this figure is, it does not adequately represent the full misery of our condition. We had neither light nor sight. That we may be saved, do you not perceive that two things, therefore, must be done for us? We require a medium to see by, as well as eyes to see with; to the revelation of the Gospel must be added the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, in other words, we must have in Christ an object for faith to see, and in faith we must have eyes to see Christ. Inhabitants of a Christian land, we possess one of these,—like the Hebrews in Goshen we have a light in our dwellings; and so far we differ from the heathen, for they have neither light nor sight. They live in darkness so gross, that they do not distinguish purity from pollution. They have no more idea of the way of salvation than the blind have of colors. They do not know God. Some worship a cow; some a serpent; some a stone; some the very Devil. In them, reason crouches to adore a beast; and man, made in the image of God, bows his erect form and noble head before a lifeless block. When, from the study of that instinctive and unerring wisdom with which the lower animals—the stork in the period of her migrations, the bee in the construction of its cell—act in their allotted spheres, we turn to this amazing, and all but incredible senselessness and stupidity of man, what an illustration have we of the saying, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

But we, who dwell in this land, as I have already said, live in light. Like the angel whom John saw, we stand in the sun. Comparing it with most other lands, we may, at least, call our island-home a Goshen. Let these boast their balmy air, and richer fruits, and sunnier skies! In our religious as well as civil advantages, we enjoy blessings that more than compensate for the gloomy fogs that veil those skies, and the storms that rage on our iron-bound shores. Our lines have fallen in pleasant places, and happy the land, nor to be rashly left, where the light of divine truth streams from a thousand printing-presses, and the candle of the Lord shines bright in its humblest cottages. May I not say that, with their multitude of churches, our cities are illuminated every Sabbath, to celebrate the triumphs of the cross, the great battle that was won on the heights of Calvary, and the peace his heralds proclaim between God and man? Men do perish, yet none need perish. There is no lack of knowledge. The road to heaven is plain. "The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." It is better lighted than any street of this city, or the rugged coasts along which our seamen steer, or the harbors which, over surf-beaten bars, they boldly take in winter's blackest night.

Notwithstanding the fulness of our light, what multitudes are wrecked and perish! They never reach the harbor, nor arriving in heaven, get home! And I am bound to tell you that, unless He, who gave sight to the blind, apply his finger, and touch your eyes with "eye-salve," their fate shall be yours. What though light streams on our eye-balls? We are in darkness till we are converted; because we are blind—and that not by accident, but by nature—born blind. There are animals, both wild and domestic, which, by a strange and mysterious law of Providence, are born in that state. "Having eyes, they see not." Apparently unripe for the birth, they leave their mother's womb to pass the first period of their being utterly sightless. But, when some ten days have come and gone, time unseals their eye-lids, and they are delivered from the power of darkness. But not ten days, nor years, nor any length of time, will do us such friendly office. Not that we shall be always blind. Oh, how men shall see, and regret in another world, the folly they were guilty of in this! Eternity opens the darkest eyes, but opens them, alas, too late; "He lifted up his eyes, being in torment." He is a madman who braves that fate; yet it awaits you, unless you bestir yourselves, and, shaking sloth away, seize the golden opportunity to pursue the Saviour with the blind man's cry, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

I can fancy few sadder sights than an entire family, parents and children, all blind—a home where the flowers have no beauty, the night has no stars, the morning no blushing dawn, and the azure sky no glorious sun—a home, where they have never looked on each other's faces; but a blind father sits by the dull fire with a blind boy on his knee, and the sightless mother nurses at her bosom a sightless babe, that never gladdened her with its happy smile. How would such a spectacle touch the most callous feelings, and move to pity even a heart of stone! But a greater calamity is ours. The eyes of our understanding are darkened. Sin quenched man's sight in Eden; and strange result! the event that revealed their nakedness to our first parents, shut, closed, sealed their eyes, and those also of their children, to the greater shame of spiritual nakedness. Thus blind to their blindness, and insensible of their need of Jesus, alas! how many allow him to pass by! The precious opportunity of salvation is lost—lost perhaps for ever. Oh, for one hour of the sense and energy of the beggars that sat by the gate of Jericho! Stumbling, often falling, but always to rise, they hung on the skirts of the crowd, plunged headlong into the thick of it, and elbowing men aside, pursued Jesus with the most plaintive, pitiful, and earnest prayer, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David! Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!" Be yours that cry. Follow your Saviour on their feet; hang on him with the vehemence of one who said, "My soul followeth hard after thee." Be turned by nothing from your purpose—keep following, and, as you follow, crying; and I promise you that that cry will stop him as sure as Joshua's pierced the heavens, and stopped the glowing axles of the sun.

That we may have a deep, and, by God's blessing, a saving impression of our need of salvation, let us look at some aspects of our state by nature, in the light, if I may say so, of its darkness.

1. Darkness is a state of indolence.

Night is the proper period for rest. When—emblem of a Christian at his evening prayers—the lark sings in the close of day, and leaves the skies to drop into her dewy nest; when from distant uplands, the rooks—a noisy crowd—come sailing, wheeling home; when the flowers shut their beautiful eyes; when the sun, retiring within the cloudy curtains of the evening, sinks into his ocean bed, nature, however some may neglect her lessons, teaches man to seek repose. So, with some exceptions, all honest men and women go to sleep in the dark. "They that sleep, sleep in the night;" and this busy world lies hushed in the arms of slumber, till morning, looking in at the window, calls up toil to resume her labors; and thus, when we have been summoned at midnight to a bed of death, how loud the foot-fall sounded in the empty thoroughfare! With thousands around who gave no sign of life; with none abroad but prowling dog, or houseless outcast, or some guilty wretch, with the tall, grim tenements wrapped in gloom, save where student's lamp, or the faint light of a sick chamber glimmered dim and drear, we have felt such awe as he might do who walks through a city of the dead. Yet, in its hours of deepest darkness and quietest repose, this city presents no true picture of our state by nature. We see it yonder where a city sleeps, while eager angels point Lot's eyes to the break of day, and urge his tardy steps through the doomed streets of Sodom. A fiery firmament hangs over all the unconverted; and there is need that God send his grace to do them an angel's office, saving them from impending judgments. Are you still exposed to the wrath of God? Rouse thee, then, from sleep, shake off thy indolence, and leap from thy bed, it is all one whether thou burn on a couch of down or straw. "Escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed," betake you to the Saviour, lest—since the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and he died for the chief of sinners, and salvation is without money and without price, and God is not willing that any should perish—thou perish, more, in a sense, the victim of thy sloth than of thy guiltiest sins.

Ancient Egypt, however, supplies perhaps the best illustration of the connection which subsists between a state of darkness and a state of indolence. God said to Moses, "Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven, and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days." And how passed these days of darkness? They neither bought nor sold; they neither married nor buried; they neither rocked a cradle nor embalmed a corpse. No hammer rang, no merry wheel went round, no fire burned at the brick kiln, no women sang "behind the mill," no busy tread sounded on the pavement, nor cheerful dash of oar upon the water. An awful silence reigned throughout the land; as if every house had been in a moment changed into a tomb, and each living man into a mummied corpse, they sat motionless —the king on his weary throne, the peasant in the field, the weaver at his loom, the prisoner in his dungeon. As in the story of some old romance, where a bold knight, going in quest of adventures, sounds his horn at the castle gate, and, getting no response, enters to find king, courtiers, servants, horses, all turned into stone; they sat, spell-bound, where the darkness seized them. "They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days."

Still greater wonder! many a man in this world has not risen from his place, I say not for three days, nor for three years, but ten times three years and more. He is no nearer heaven than he was a long time ago. Borne on, indeed, by the ever-flowing stream of time, and ever-downward course of sin, alas! he is nearer the brink of hell. Perilous indolence! God says, "labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," "give diligence to make your calling and election sure," "seek ye the Lord while he may be found," and, therefore, I say, be up and doing ; time is short, the stake is great, death is at the door, and if he find you out of Christ, damnation is at his heels. "And I looked, and behold a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." Of your many calls and opportunities, is this all the result? Half awakened, yet unwilling to tear yourself from the arms of pleasure, do you avert your eyes from the light? angry perhaps at being disturbed, perhaps half sorrowful do you bid us come back at "a more convenient season?" Drowsily turning on your deceitful couch, do you say, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep?" Then, in God's name, I ask what shall be the end of these things? The end of these things is death.

2. Darkness is a state of ignorance.

Conducted under the veil of night to the nuptial couch, Jacob finds in the possession of Rachel, as he supposes, an ample reward for the seven long years of weary work and waiting. She whom his heart wooed and his hands won, is now his wedded wife. He wakes a happy man, neither suspecting how God had punished him for the deceit he practised on his old, blind father, nor how Laban, a greater master of craft than himself, had substituted the elder for the younger daughter. Fancy his confusion, when he turns, by the rosy light of morn, to gaze on his beautiful bride, to find the blear-eyed Leah at his side. Yet a day approaches when, from dreams of wealth and pleasure many shall awake in rage and unavailing sorrow, to the discovery of a greater mistake. What Jacob's mistake to his who, embracing pleasure, wakens to find himself in the arms of a hideous demon, dragging him down—struggling, shrieking, into the lowest hell?

But if we would see spiritual darkness represented on a scale in any degree commensurate with the multitude of its victims, and with its destructive power, let us turn to the host of Midian. The memorable night has come when, animated by a divine courage, Gideon leads his three hundred to the bold assault. Silently he plants them around the enemy's lines, waiting till song and revel have died away, and that mighty host lies buried in stillest slumbers. Then, one trumpet blows loud and clear, startling the wary sentinel on his round. He stops, he listens, and ere its last echoes have ceased, the whole air is torn with battle-notes. Out of the darkness trumpet replies to trumpet, and the blast of three hundred, blown loud and long, wakens the deepest sleeper, filling the ear of night with a dreadful din, and the hearts of the bravest with strange and sudden fear. Ere they can ask what mean, whence come these sounds, a sight as strange blazes up through the murky night. Three hundred torch-fires pierce the gloom, and advance in flaming circle on the panic-stricken camp. Suddenly extinguished, once more all is dark; then, as if the dust of the whirlwind, or the sands of the desert, or the leaves of the forest, had turned into armed men, ready to burst on that uncircumcised host; in front, on their rear, on either flank, rings the Hebrews' battle cry: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" For dear life the Midianites draw; mistaking friend for foe, they bury their swords in each other's bosoms. Wild with terror, stricken mad with pain, each man seizes his fellow by the beard, giving and receiving mortal wounds. And so, not by the arms of Gideon, so much as by the hand of the darkness, was skill outwitted, and bravery defeated, and that mighty army routed and slain. Such is the power of darkness! Yet what is that dying host to one lost soul!

Ugliness and beauty, friend and foe, are all one in the dark. And so are all roads when the belated traveller cannot see his finger before him, and the watery pool throws off no gleam, and earth and sky appear a solid mass of darkness. Unconscious of danger, and dreaming of a home he shall never more see, he draws near the precipice; his foot is on its grassy edge, another step, one loud shriek, and there he lies, a bleeding mass, beneath the crag. Nor when night comes down upon the deep in fog, or rain, or blinding drift, can the ill-starred mariner distinguish the rock from the sea, or a wrecker's fire from the harbor lights; thus showing us how many sinners perish—the darkness is the cause of their death. They are lost, victims to the "power of darkness."

The greatest of all mistakes is to miss the path to heaven. Yet see how many, turning from Christ, who says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," in the darkness of their understandings, and the depravity of their hearts, have missed, and are missing it? Some think that their charities, and public usefulness, and household duties, will save them. Some think, by going the round and lifeless routine of prayers, and preachings, and sacraments, and outward services, that they will certainly secure the favor of God. Some think they may go on in sin, and for a while longer dare the danger, and then put up the helm—veering round when they like on the other tack; while many fancy that they are on the road to heaven, when every step they take, and every day they live, is carrying them farther and farther away. Others regard religion as a thing of gloom; they reckon the friends of their souls to be the enemies of their happiness. Infatuated men! they fly from the voice of the Shepherd to throw themselves into the jaws of the wolf. Nay, there are some plunged in yet deeper moral darkness, who remind me of a convict whom I saw in the Hulks—that frightful concentration of villany and crime. He had seated himself ostentatiously on a bench. With no blush burning on his beardless cheek, but with an expression rather of satisfaction in his face, the boy was polishing the fetter on his ankle. Poor wretch, he was vain of its silvery sheen, and raised sad thoughts in us of pity and wonder at the darkness of his neglected soul. And yet more dark and dreadful is the state of many who would once have said of the life they now lead, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" Gone in iniquity, they boast, with unblushing face, of the victims whom they have seduced; of the abominable debaucheries which they practise; of virtue ensnared by their villanous arts; of simple, unsuspecting honesty they have overreached; of their scorn for religion, of their contempt of its professors, and their loose, licentious freedom from its holiest bonds. They blazon their sins upon their foreheads, and, parading them before the world, glory in their shame.

No man wishes, no man intends, to go to Hell. And who, that was not plunged in the ignorance of deepest darkness, would choose death rather than life, would embrace sin rather than the Saviour, would wave away the cup of salvation to seize a poisoned chalice, and drink down damning draughts of forbidden pleasure? May God enlighten your eyes lest you sleep the sleep of death! Be not deceived. The tale of the goblet, which the genius of a heathen fashioned, was true; and taught a moral of which many a deathbed furnishes the melancholy illustration. Having made the model of a serpent, he fixed it in the bottom of the cup. Coiled for the spring, a pair of gleaming eyes in its head, and in its open mouth fangs raised to strike, it lay beneath the ruby wine. Nor did he who raised that golden cup to quench his thirst, and quaff the delicious draught, suspect what lay below, till as he reached the dregs, that dreadful head rose up and glistened before his eyes. So, when life's cup is nearly emptied, and sin's last pleasure quaffed, and unwilling lips are draining the bitter dregs, shall rise the ghastly terrors of remorse, and death, and judgment, upon the despairing soul. Be assured, a serpent lurks at the bottom of guilt's sweetest pleasure. To this awful truth may God, by his own word and Holy Spirit, open your eyes! Seeing the serpent, seized with holy horror at the sight, may you fling the temptation from you; and turn to Him, who, with love in his heart, and kindness in his looks, and forgiveness on his lips, and the cup of salvation held out in his hand, cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Here, believe me, is peace that passeth understanding; here are joys that will bear the morning's reflection, pleasures that are for evermore.

The Power of Darkness.

(CONTINUED.)

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.—COLOSSIANS i. 13.

SAILING once along a coast where a friend had suffered shipwreck, the scene which recalled his danger filled us with no fear. Because, while his ship, on the night she ran ashore, was cutting her way through the densest fog, we were ploughing the waters of a silver sea, where noble headlands, and pillared cliffs, and scattered islands, and surf-beaten reefs, stood bathed in the brightest moonshine. There was no danger, just because there was no darkness.

The thick and heavy haze is, of all hazards, that which the wary seaman holds in greatest dread. It exposes him to accidents which neither care nor skill can avert. In a moment his bark may go crashing on the treacherous rock, or, run down by another ship, fill and founder in the deep. Rather than a glassy sea, wrapped in gloom, give him the roaring storm and its mountain billows, with an open sky above his head, and wide sea-room around. And, in a sense, is it not so with a Christian man? Give him the light of heaven—let him enjoy both a clear sense of his interest in Christ, and a clear sight of his duty to Christ, and, in the midst of trials and temptations, how nobly he rides over them! He rises on the waves which seemed about to overwhelm him, and holds on his course to heaven—safer in the storm than others are in the calm. Enjoying the sunshine of God's countenance within his soul, and the light of God's word on his path of duty, the man is cheerful where others are cast down; he sings when others weep; when others tremble, he is calm, perhaps even jubilant; and, the Lord his Saviour, because his sun, he adopts the brave words of David, saying, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

In resuming the subject of the previous discourse, this leads me to remark—

3. That darkness is a state of danger. As locks and bars prove, neither life nor property is safe by night as they are by day. Honesty, having nothing to blush for or to conceal, pursues her business in open day; but crime seeks the cover of the night. And what is that thief, prowling abroad like a fox, and with stealthy foot creeping along under shadow of the wall; what that assassin, searching the gloom, and listening for the step of his victim's approach; what she, who, issuing from a den of sin, and throwing the veil of night over painted cheek and faded finery, lurks in the streets for her prey—what are these, but types of him who is the enemy of man, and takes advantage of spiritual darkness to ensnare or assault God's children, and to ruin poor thoughtless sinners.

Such danger is there in darkness, that people have perished within reach of home, almost at their own door. So it befell one who was found in a winter morning stretched cold and dead on a bed of snow—her glazed eyes and rigid form contrasting strangely with her gay attire. She began the night with dances, and ended it with death. She leaves the merry revels of a marriage-scene for her home across the mountain. The stars go out, and the storm comes on. Bewildered by the howling tempest, and the blinding drift, and the black night, she loses her way. Long the struggle lasts. At length, worn out and benumbed, she stretches her fragile form on that fatal bed, and, amid dreams, perhaps, of dances, and song, and merriment, she sinks into the sleep that knows no waking. Nor was it when snows were melted, and months or years had gone, that her withering form was found by a wandering shepherd on some drear upland, in a lone mountain corrie, half buried in a dark and deep morass. No. She met her fate near by a friendly door, and perished in the darkness within a step of safety. Yet not nearer, nor so near it, as many are to salvation, who yet are lost. They die by the very door of heaven. The Apostle tells us how, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." The darkness is their death.

And while no night ever came down so black and starless as that which has settled on the human soul, in respect of its power over men, what can be compared to mental, moral, spiritual darkness? Its chains are more difficult to rend than chains of brass or iron. Look at Popery! She immures her votaries in a gloomier dungeon than ever held her victims. And throwing her fetters, not over the limbs, but over the free mind of man, what an illustration does she give of "the power of darkness?" How formidable is that power which compels a man to sacrifice his reason at the feet of priestcraft; and woman, shrinking, modest, delicate woman, to allow some foul hand to search her bosom, and to drag its secrets from their close concealment. Best gift of heaven! God sends them his blessed word, and they dare not open it. Those senses of smell, and touch, and taste, which are the voice of God, declare that the cup is filled with wine, and the wafer made of wheat; but, as if their senses as well as their souls were darkened, they believe that to be a living man's blood, and this to be a living man's flesh! "Having eyes, they see not." And, greatest triumph of darkness! they hug their chains; refuse instruction; stop their ears, like the deaf adder which will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely; and turn away their eyes from the truth, as the owls that haunt some old monastic ruin from the glare of a torch, or the blaze of day. How appropriate to the devotees of a faith so detestable, the words of Scripture—"If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Censure, as well as charity, however, should begin at home; and therefore, to be faithful to ourselves as well as just to others, we ought not to forget that melancholy illustrations of the power of darkness are found nearer at hand than Rome. In the face of all past and much bitter experience, how many among ourselves live under the delusion that, though the happiness they seek and expect to find in the world has, in all bygone time, eluded their grasp, in the object they now pursue, they shall certainly embrace the mocking phantom! How many among ourselves, also, are putting away the claims of Christ and of their souls to what they flatter themselves shall be a more, but what must be a less, convenient season! Contrary to the testimony of all who have ever tried it, do not many of us persist in believing God's service to be a weariness, and piety a life of cheerless gloom? Many regard the slavery of sin as liberty, and shun the liberty of Christ as intolerable bondage. Many fancy themselves to be safe, who, hanging over perdition by life's most slender thread, are "ready to perish." Talk of the delusions of Popery and the credulity of Papists! Many among us believe the barest and most naked lies of the devil, rather than the plain word of God. Alas! the feet of thousands here are on the dark mountains; and, unless God shall enlighten them by his Spirit, the darkness, which is now their danger, shall prove their death.

Were you, under the tyranny of mortal man, immured in his strongest dungeon, I would not despair of your escape. Within an old castle that sits picturesquely perched upon a noble sea rock, and to whose crumbling walls the memory of other days clings, fresh and green as the ivy that mantles them, there is a sight to strike men with horror. Passing under a low-browed portal, where you bid farewell to the light and air of heaven, a flight of broken steps conducts you down into a chill, gloomy vault. In the centre of its rocky floor yawn the jaws of a horrid pit. The candle, lighted and swung into that dread abyss, goes down, and yet deeper down, till, in an excavated dungeon in the rock, it dimly reveals the horrors of a living grave. There the cry for help could reach no ear but God's; and no sound responded to the captive's moan but the dull steady stroke of the billows, as they burst on the face of the crag. Into that sepulchre—where they buried God's persecuted saints—you look to shudder, and to say, "for them hope was none." Yet immure a man in that—in the darkest, strongest dungeon despot has ever built, and give him hope for a companion, liberty for his bosom-wish, a brave heart, a stout hand, and, some morning, his goaler enters to find the cage empty, and the bird flown. But, for you that are under the power of darkness—for you, who are at once the servants and slaves and captives of the Prince of Darkness—for you, whom he first blinds, and then binds, there is no help in man.

There is help in God. Sin never wove, in hottest hell-fires the devil never forged, a chain, which the Spirit of God, wielding the hammer of the word, cannot strike from fettered limbs. Put that to the test. Try the power of prayer. Let continued, constant, earnest, wrestling prayer be made for those that are chained to their sins, and, so to speak, thrust "into the inner prison," and see whether, as on that night when Peter was led forth by the angel's hand, your prayers are not turned into most grateful praises. From the belly of the whale, from the depths of ocean, from the darkness of a perpetual night, God brought up Jonah to sunny shores and lightsome liberty. And let that same God hear from vilest lips the cry of danger —Lord save me, I perish—the cry of earnest desire, of lowly penitence, of an awakened conscience, of humble faith, and he shall save them by a great deliverance. He will bow his heavens and come down. True to his word, he, who never said to any of the sons of men, "Seek ye me in vain," will deliver from the power of darkness, and translate into the "kingdom of his dear Son."

Having from these words considered our state of nature under the emblem of darkness, I would now remark—

II. That even God's people remain in more or less darkness, so long as they are here.

1. They may be in darkness through ignorance. Their eyes have been divinely opened, and they can say with the man of old, "This I know, that I once was blind, but now I see." Having received "the truth as it is in Jesus," and abandoned the works of darkness, they are therefore called "the children of light, and the children of the day." Yet all of them do not enjoy the same measure of light, nor are they all possessed of equal powers of sight. Skies differ, and eyes differ; and hence those conflicting views which have separated brother from brother, and rent Christ's church into so many most unfortunate and lamentable divisions.

It is easy to understand how this happens. Let objects be looked at through an imperfect light, and how different the appearance from the reality! What mistakes we fall into! In the gray morning, I have seen the fog-bank that filled the valley wear the aspect of a lake, where every wood-crowned knoll lay as a beautiful island, asleep on its placid bosom. How often has superstition fled, pale, shrieking from the churchyard to report to gaping rustics that the dead were walking; when it was but the pale moonlight struggling through the waving branches of the old elms, that had transformed some grave-stone into a sheeted spectre! And, seen through a mist, the very sun itself is shorn of its glorious splendor, turned into a dull, red, copper ball; while mean objects, regarded through the same false medium, acquire a false dignity—bushes are magnified into trees, and the humble cottage rises into a stately mansion. And do not God's people fall into as great mistakes, when they look at divine truth through their defective vision, and through the mist of those passions and prejudices that are common to our poor humanity? There should be much more latitude allowed for those differences of opinion which are inseparable from our present state; but, forgetting to temper the ardent zeal with the loving and liberal spirit of the great Apostle, Christian men have allowed differences to grow up into quarrels, and quarrels to ripen into divisions, till they, who once took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company, part, saying, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed? A time approaches, blessed be God, when this unseemly state of matters shall cease. According to old legends, the ghosts all vanished at cock-crowing. And, as the day dispersed the spectres, and the rolling away of the mist from the landscape rolls away also the mistakes it led to, even so, when the day of the Lord comes, it will settle all controversies—great and small. In "the seven-fold" light of Zion, God's children shall see "eye to eye." They shall not only behold "Him as he is," and "the truth" as it is, but, with loving surprise, their brethren as they are. There shall be no differences, because there shall be no darkness. "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know, even also as I am known."

Meanwhile, He, who is sovereign in his dealings, and gives no account of His ways, has not equally distributed the light of saving truth; nor is there anything in the kingdom of grace corresponding to a remarkable fact in nature. Under the equator each day consists of twelve hours of light, and as many of darkness, the whole year round. But pass by one long stride to the polar regions, and, according as the season is summer or winter, you stand beneath a sky which either enjoys perpetual day, or is wrapped in perpetual night. There, Dr. Kane and his ship's crew, for instance, never saw the sun for one hundred and forty long and weary days ; but were left, as in those Pagan lands on which the gospel has never shone, tou nbroken night. During all that long period the sun never rose above the horizon to cheer their icy prison with one beam of light. Yet, taking the whole year round, the inhabitants of these dreary climes have the same period of light as we and others ; for theirs are nightless summers, on which the stars never rise, and the sun never sets, but wheels his burning chariot round and round the pole. Now, in regard to saving light and knowledge, we find nothing corresponding to this phenomenon. Strange mysterious providence ! there is no such equal diffusion of gospel truth. We dare not doubt that God's ways are equal, and that eternity will shed a wondrous and glorious light on this gloomy mystery ; but over a vast surface of our unhappy world we see only darkness—" gross darkness"—unbroken night—nations that never hailed the rising of a better sun.

But, leaving the Heathen in the hands of God, we find some Christian nations in such darkness, as to make it almost a marvel to us how they find their way to heaven. I cannot, and would not doubt, that the Church of Rome, for instance, has true saints within her—chosen ones, who shall be plucked as brands from the fire, cast out, like praying Jonah, safe upon the land. Still, within that church the people enjoy at best " a dim religious light." The gospel, permitted to reach them only through blind or selfish priests, suffers like change with the sunbeam that streams through the colored windows of their gorgeous but gloomy cathedrals; and, with a cloud of saints interposed between him and the eye of the sinner, the Saviour, like the sun behind misty vapors, stands shorn of his resplendent glory.

Again, in those few countries where in full freedom to use the Bible, and in the general use of it, the gospel may be said to shine with unclouded splendor, God's people do not all walk in the same degree of light. Be it owing to peculiar circumstances, or to some defect of vision, they are not all equally enlightened. Some are offensively narrow-minded. Some are so short-sighted that they can hardly recognize Christ's own, and therefore their own brother, unless he belong to the same church, and remember the Saviour at the same table with themselves. They are great upon little things. More given to hate the error than love the truth which they see in others, their temper is sour and ungenial. I do not assert that they have not the eagle-wings which rise to near communion with God, but they want that long-sighted eagle-eye which discerns distant objects, and embraces in its range of vision a broad and wide expanse. Be ours the charity which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things!

Again, while some saints enjoy a clear assurance of their salvation, and stretching toward heaven, behold the land that is very far off, as seamen from their outlook descry the mountain-tops, when their bark is ploughing a waste of waters, and yet a long way from land, there are other Christians who pass their days in a state of despondency. The sun seldom breaks out to cheer them. Their faith has a hard fight with their fears. It is little they know of rejoicing in the Lord, and joying in the God of their salvation. By help of God's word, their compass, they succeed, no doubt, in steering their way to heaven, but it is over a troubled sea and under a cloudy sky ; nor are they ever happy enough to be altogether delivered from doubt and fear, till fears as well as faith are lost in light, and they find themselves safe in glory.

Again, while some, who draw all the doctrines they believe directly and freshly from the fountain of God's word, are enlightened, catholic in spirit, and sound in the faith, it is otherwise with others. Calling this or that man Rabbi, they yield too much submission to human authority. They draw the water of life, so to speak, not at the spring but at the well; and tasting of the pipe it flows through, their creed, and faith, and doctrines are adulterated by a mixture of earthly, though not fatal, errors.

If we allow to these views their due influence, how ought they to expand our hearts, and teach us a tender regard toward those from whom we differ! Blindness of mind, surely, if not willful, claims our gentle pity, more even than blindness of body. We all "see through a glass darkly." Perhaps we are mistaken. Perhaps our brethren are right. The possibility of this should teach us to differ meekly, and to avoid, even when denying the infallibility of the pope, the arrogance of one who thinks himself infallible. Of this, at any rate, I am sure, that, as objects are not only obscured but also magnified by mist, many points of difference between Christian men appear much larger now than they shall do when regarded by the serene light of a deathbed, and yet more certainly in the transparent atmosphere of heaven. And were it not well if good men would never forget that piety, though not consistent with indifference, is consistent with a measure of error. Admit that, by heaping "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble" on the true foundation, others have done wrong; yet they shall be saved, though as by fire. The errors of many are delusions; and it is both literally and figuratively true that delusions of the brain are less dangerous than disease of the heart. A man, through the darkness, may wander to a greater or less extent from the plain, patent, direct road, and yet get home. And happiest though they be who pursue their journey in unclouded sunshine, yet to the upright "there ariseth light in the darkness"—shed by the Spirit within their souls, streaming down direct from heaven. And I have often thought it shall be with those whose hearts beat true to God and Jesus Christ, as with one who loves his father and his mother, and longs once more to see their faces, and to hear their voices, and after weary years of exile, to dwell again among brothers and sisters beneath the old roof-tree. Little light serves to show him the road. Bent on getting home, he will cross the mountains, and ford the river, and travel waste and pathless moors through the mists of the thickest day. What although errors, like exhalations from the swampy ground, have risen up in many churches to obscure the heavenly light? Where there is genuine love to Jesus Christ, and God, and man, may we not cherish the hope that there is truth enough to conduct to heaven the steps of every pilgrim who is honestly and earnestly inquiring the way to Zion? "There shall be a highway out of Egypt." "They shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north, and from the south,"—from various climes, and from diverse churches,—"and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." Nor do I despair of any getting to that heavenly kingdom, who, though belonging to churches that are dimly lighted, can discern upon the altar the one sacrifice for sin.

2. God's people may be in darkness through sin. So long as you walk in the path of his holy commandments you walk in light, walk at liberty; you have Jesus' arm to lean on; heaven lies straight on the road before you; and, on your path, however rough or steep, there streams perpetual sunshine. In the light of God's word, and in the beams of his countenance, the believer has that which imparts a genial warmth to his heart; every object, as in a sunny day, looks bright and beautiful; and the clouds which occasionally sweep over him and discharge their burden on his head, are spanned, as they pass away, by a bow of hope. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation!" the cry of one who has wandered from the paths of purity and peace, leads us to speak, in such cases, of God withdrawing the light of his countenance. But is it not more strictly true, that, in turning aside from the paths of holiness, we have withdrawn from that? It is he that descends into a pit who leaves the light, not the light that leaves him. So it is with the saint—the deeper he sinks into sin, the darker it grows. God will not smile on his child sinning; and that which would happen to our world, were its sun withdrawn, befalls his unhappy soul; a chilling cold follows on the darkness, and, but for restoring grace, death itself would follow in their train. The heart, that once sang like a bird, is now mute; the beauties of religion are lost to sight; sacraments, prayers, pious services, cease to afford their wonted pleasure; the joys of salvation—that once flowed through his heart, like silver streams among flowery pastures—are congealed into stillness, silence, and death; the soul itself grows benumbed, and is seized with a lethargy that would end in death, did not God send some Nathan to break the spell, and to rouse the sleeper. Then, conscience awakened and alarmed, in what darkness does he find himself? The sun is down; nor does a single star cheer that deepest night. His mind is tortured with dreadful doubts. He recalls the days of old, but only to fear that he was a hypocrite or a self-deceiver. Where the scriptures speak of castaways, of the unpardonable sin, of the impossibility of a renewal again unto repentance, he seems to read his doom, written by God's own finger in letters of fire. Nor is the poor penitent backslider saved from utter despair, but by clinging to the hope of mercy through the all-cleansing blood of Jesus. Led by this blessed angel to "the throne of grace," encouraged by this blessed promise, "I will heal their backslidings and love them freely," he throws himself in the dust to cry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" "Is his mercy clean gone for ever?" "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." "Be merciful unto me, O God; be merciful unto me."

These are the words of David, when under remorse for most terrible crimes. But never fancy that you are in no danger of losing the light of God's favor, unless you fall into a pit as deep, into sins as gross and grievous, as that good man committed. Beware of so great an error. No object, in its own place the most innocent, nor man, nor woman, nor husband, nor wife, nor child, nor bosom friend—nothing beneath the sun, not the heaven above it, with its holy pleasures, and high society, and welcome rest, may be allowed to come in between our affections and Jesus Christ. Let any object whatever interpose between me and the sun, and a shadow, more or less cold and dark, is the immediate consequence; as happens when the moon, forgetting that her business is to reflect the sunbeams, not to arrest them, rolls in between our world and him, to turn day into night, and to shroud us in the gloom of an eclipse. Even so the deep shadow of a spiritual darkness may be flung over a congregation, who, allowing the pulpit to come in between them and the cross, think too much of the servant and too little of the Master. May not that account for the scanty fruit of a ministry from which much might have been expected? God will not give his glory to another; and they who in their regards set the servant before the Master, place the preacher in a position to intercept that blessing, without which Paul may plant and Apollos water but there is no increase. When Alexander offered to do Diogenes any favor he might ask, the philosopher, contemplating in the sun a far nobler object than the conqueror of the world, and setting a higher value on his beams than on the brightest rays of royalty, only begged the monarch to step aside, nor stand between him and the sun. However rude such answer on the part of the cynic, it were a right noble speech from you to any and every object that would steal your heart from Christ. Let him, who is all your salvation, be all your desire. Is he not "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person?" Fairer than the children of men, more lovely than the loveliest, he is "the chiefest among ten thousand"—he is "altogether lovely."

3. *God's people may be in more or less darkness as to their spiritual state.* It is easy to account for such a case as David's. There, spiritual darkness was both the consequence and the chastisement of a sad spiritual declension. It is not always so. There are cases of religious desertion and despondency that do not admit of being thus explained. Without any sensible falling away, the shadow of Calvary has spread itself over the believer's soul; and, filling him with awful horror, has wrung from his lips that most bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The mercy-seat and the cross are lost in darkness. The Sun of Righteousness undergoes an eclipse. Nothing is seen but the lightnings, and nothing heard but the thunders of Sinai—flash follows flash, and peal thunders upon peal, while his sins rise up in terrible memory before him. Were such your case, God has provided for it. "Who," says he, "is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." In these cases God has not left his people comfortless. If, perhaps, like Peter, sinking in the waves of Galilee, the lightning flashing on their foaming crests, and the thunder crashing above his head, you have lost all sensible hold of Christ, it does not follow that Christ has lost saving hold of you. You may retain your hold when you lose your sight of him. God's people are to hang on him in their seasons of deepest distress. His promises are a Father's arm; and clinging to these, trusting to him when you cannot see him, you may hope against hope, and even rise to the faith of one who said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

But the spiritual state of some unquestionably pious people is not occasionally, but always more or less dark. I have known such. They could not find, at least they could not feel, any very satisfactory evidence of their conversion. We saw it; they did not. It happened to them as to Moses. He left the mount of God with the glory of his face visible to every one but himself. This is not a desirable state, certainly, if for no other reason than this, that he fights best, either with men or devils, who fights the battle with hope at his back. What so likely to make you diligent in preparation for glory, as a clear prospect of heaven, and sense of your holy calling? Who that, footsore, worn, and weary, has toiled up some mountain-height, from whose breezy summit he saw his distant home, has not found the sight make another man of him, and—all lassitude gone—send him off on his journey, with bounding heart and elastic limbs? Therefore we say with Paul, "Give diligence, to make your calling and election sure."

Notwithstanding all your pains and all your prayers, have you never yet attained to the joy of faith, to a full assurance of salvation? Be not "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." Blessed are they whose sky is clouded with no doubts or fears! With music in their hearts, and their happiness blowing like those flowers that fully expand their leaves, and breathe out their fragrance only on sunny days, they will go up to Zion with songs; yet, although not so pleasantly, they may reach home as safely who enjoy the light of the sun, but never see his face. Your last hours may be like hers whom John Bunyan calls Miss Fearing. She was all her lifetime "subject to bondage," and dreaded the hour of death. The summons comes. And when she goes down into the waters, how does this shrinking, trembling, timid one bear herself? Hand to hand, Christian met his enemy in the valley, and so smote Apollyon with the sword of the Spirit, that he spread forth his dragon wings, and sped him away ; yet where that bold believer was in deep waters, and all but perished, this daughter of many fears found the river shallow. She beheld the opposite shore all lined with shining angels, and passed with a song from earth to heaven.

The sun, who has struggled through clouds all day long, often breaks forth into golden splendor at his setting ; and not seldom, also, have the hopes that never brightened life broken forth to gild the departing hour. The fears that hung over the journey have vanished at its close. The voice, that never spoke with confidence before, has raised the shout of victory in " the valley of the shadow of death." To the wonder of men and the glory of God, the tongue of the dumb has been unloosed—what gracious things they have said ! and the blind have got their sight—what views of heaven they have had ! and he, who seemed all his life but a babe in Christ, has started up, like a giant and a strong man armed, to grapple with the last enemy. Standing in the light of life's declining day—with Satan, and the world, and the flesh, and Death himself beneath his feet, he spends his last breath in the triumphant shout, " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?" " Thanks be to God, which giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ." And thus God fulfils the promise, " It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

The Kingdom of Christ.

Translated into the kingdom of his dear Son.—COLOSSIANS i. 13.

INSIDE those iron gratings that protect the ancient regalia of our kingdom, vulgar curiosity sees nothing but a display of jewels. Its stupid eyes are dazzled by the gems that stud the crown, and sword, and sceptre. The unreflecting multitude fix their thoughts and waste their admiration on these. They go away to talk of their beauty, perhaps to covet their possession; nor do they estimate the value of the crown but by the price which its pearls, and rubies, and diamonds, might fetch in the market.

The eye of a patriot, gazing thoughtfully in on these relics of former days, is all but blind to what attracts the gaping crowd. His admiration is reserved for other and nobler objects. He looks with deep and meditative interest on that rim of gold, not for its intrinsic value, but because it once encircled the brow of Scotland's greatest king,—the hero of her independence, Robert the Bruce. His fancy may for a moment turn to the festive scenes in yonder deserted palace, when that crown flashed amid a gay throng of princes, and nobles, and knights, and statesmen, and lords, and ladies, all now mouldered into dust; but she soon wings her flight to the worthier and more stirring spectacles which history has associated with these symbols of power. She sees a nation up in arms for its independence, and watches with kindling eye the varying fortunes of the fight. It rages around these insignia. Now, she hears the shout of Bannockburn; and now, the long wail of Flodden. The events of centuries, passed in weary war, roll by before her. The red flames burst from lonely fortalice and busy town; the smiling vale, with its happy homesteads, lies desolate; scaffolds reek with the blood of patriots; courage grapples with despair; beaten men on freedom's bloody field renew the fight; and, as the long, hard struggle closes, the kingdom stands up like one of its own rugged mountains,—the storms that expended their violence on its head, have left it ravaged, and seamed, and shattered, but not moved from its place. It is the interests that were at stake, the fight for liberty, the good blood shed, the hard struggles endured for its possession; it is these, not the jewels, which in a patriot's eye make that a costly crown—a relic of the olden time, worthy of a nation's pride and jealous preservation.

Regarded in some such light, estimated by the sufferings endured for it, how great the value of that crown which Jesus wears! What a kingdom that which cost God his Son, and cost that Son his life! It is to that kingdom that we have now to direct your attention; and for this purpose, let us consider—

I. The importance which Christ himself attaches to his kingly claims.

There are crowns worn by living monarchs, of which it would be difficult to estimate the value. The price paid for their jewels is the least part of it. They cost thousands of lives, and rivers of human blood; yet in his esteem, and surely in ours also, Christ's crown outweighs them all. He gave his life for it; and alone, of all monarchs, he was crowned at his coronation by the hands of Death. Others cease to be kings when they die. By dying he became a king. He laid his head in the dust that he might become "head over all;" he entered his kingdom through the gates of the grave, and ascended the throne of the universe by the steps of a cross.

The connection between our Lord's sufferings and kingly claims marks some of the most touching scenes of his history. In what character did his people reject him? It was as a king; they cried "We will not have this man to reign over us." In what guise did the soldiers ridicule and revile him? It was as a king; "they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head." For what crime was he crucified? It was because he claimed to be a king. The noble character of the sufferer shone through the meanest circumstances of his death, and was read in the inscription that stood above his dying head, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." His royal claims have been lightly thought of, and often trampled beneath the heavy foot of power. Men have dared to treat them with scorn. Yet he, who is surely the best judge of their importance and value, has himself taught us a very different lesson; and in proof of that, let us now turn to two separate occasions on which our Lord refused to abate one iota of these claims—maintaining them under circumstances of the strongest temptation to do otherwise.

Turn your eye on that desert, where, Heaven and Hell watching the issue at a distance, alone and without attendants, the two mightiest potentates that ever met on earth, meet—not for conference, but for conflict. Knowing that he has another now to deal with than a guileless woman—the beautiful but fragile vessel his cursed hand shattered in Eden—Satan enters the lists, armed with his deepest craft. He knows that Jesus stands before him, a poor man; who, though aspiring to universal empire, has neither friend nor follower, neither fame nor rank. Never was deeper poverty! He presents himself before us in its most touching aspect—he has neither a morsel of bread to eat, nor a bed to lie on. Ever suiting the temptation to the tempted, and, like a skillful general, assaulting the citadel on what he judges to be its weakest side, Satan comes to Jesus with no bribe for passions so low as avarice, or lust, or ease, or self-indulgence. He addresses that love of power, which was his own perdition, and is the infirmity of loftiest minds. Tacitly acknowledging, by the magnificence of the temptation, how great is the virtue of him whom he tempts, he offers him the prize of universal empire. By some phantasm of diabolical power, he presents a panoramic view of "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;" and when he thinks the spell has wrought, and that he has roused the dormant passion to its highest pitch, he turns round to Jesus, saying, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." He shall, and shall for ever, be king, if he will for once yield up his claims, and receive the kingdom at Satan's hand. No; neither from such hands, nor on such conditions, will our Lord receive the sceptre. He stands firm upon his own right to it; and, rather than yield that up, is ready to endure the cross and despise the shame. He turns with holy scorn from the temptation, and foils the Enemy with the words, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Turn now to another scene. Jesus stands before Pilate. Alone? Not now alone; worse than alone. Deserted by the few humble friends he had, without one to know him, he is confronting malignant and powerful accusers. A savage crowd surrounds him. Blind to his divine excellence, deaf to the calm voice of reason, dead to gentle pity, they glare on him with their eyes; they gnash their teeth at him; nor are restrained but by the steady port and resolute demeanor of these Roman guards from rushing in like a pack of blood-hounds, and tearing him to pieces. Blessed Lord! now, now mayest thou say, "My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." There, in that hour, see how his life hangs on a thread, on a single word. Every charge they have brought against him has broken down—bursting into spray and foam, as I have seen the sea-wave that has launched itself upon a rock. Leaving their witnesses to convict themselves of perjury, he preserves, on his part, unbroken silence. Serene and unmoved he stands the cruel pelting of the storm. Shame to his chosen disciples, shame to his followers, shame even to the thousands he had blessed and cured, not one is there to espouse his cause; and, boldly stepping out, to say, in the face of that infuriate crowd, "I know the man; I know him to be the purest, kindest, greatest, best of men. Assembly of murderers! crucify him not; or, if you will perpetrate so foul a crime, crucify me with him."

Such are the circumstances in which Pilate puts his question, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" On this question, and our Lord's answer, everything is now to turn. The crisis has come. His fate is in the balance. Let him say, no, and resign his claim—he lives; and, the baffled crowd dividing before him like the sea of old before the host of Israel, he leaves the bar for life and liberty. Let him maintain his silence—continue dumb, he is safe. Unless he compromise himself, this coward judge condemns not "innocent blood." Have you ever been present in a court of justice when the bell rang, and the jury returned, and the foreman rose to pronounce a verdict of death or life on the pale, anxious, trembling wretch who stood before you? Then you can fancy the deep, hushed, breathless silence, with which judge, and accusers, and the whole multitude, bend forward to catch our Lord's reply. If he claims to be a king, he seals his fate. If he renounces and disavows his right, the Roman sets him at liberty. Our Lord foresees this. He has a full foreknowledge of all the consequences of the word he is now to speak. Yet he claims the crown. Refusing to abandon, or even to conceal his kingly character, he returns to Pilate this bold reply, "Thou sayest;" in other words, "I am a king"—King of the Jews.

How do these facts illustrate the preëminent importance which Jesus attached to his office and character as a king! They do more than illustrate, they demonstrate it. To explain this, let me recall a recent circumstance to your recollection. When our Indian empire was shaken to its foundations, and, as many feared, tottering to its fall, the enemy in one instance offered terms of compromise. They were rejected. Unmoved by the most adverse fortunes, undismayed by the pestilence, starvation, and murder, which stared them in the face, with the hope of relief burning lower and lower as the weary days wore on, our gallant countrymen, in the darkest hour and crisis of their fortunes, would listen to no compromise. They could die but not yield ; and so sent back this stern answer, "We refuse to treat with mutineers." And if we would yield up no right in the hour of our greatest weakness and terrible extremity, far less shall we do so with the tide of battle turned in our favor, and that enemy crushed, or crouching in abject terror at our feet. Now, our Lord had the strongest temptations to abandon his kingly claims ; and if he refused to give them up in the desert, where he had not a morsel to eat, and at the bar, when to have parted with them would have saved his life, he is not likely now certainly to yield one jot or tittle of what belongs to him as a King. He has no inducement to do so. A friendless prisoner no more, he stands at the right hand of God ; the head which was bound round with a thorn wreath, now wears the crown of earth and heaven ; and the hand they mocked with a reed sways, over angels, men, and devils, the sceptre of universal empire. Think you that Christ will allow Satan, or the world, or the flesh, to pluck from his power what they could not wring from his weakness ? Never. He will never consent to share his throne with rivals from whom he won it. He claims to reign supreme in your hearts, in every heart which his grace has renewed, over all whom he has conquered by love and redeemed with blood.

Would God that we could live up to that truth ! How often, and to what a sad extent, is it forgotten ! each of us doing what is right in his own eyes, as if there was no king in Israel. Oh, that we were as anxious to be delivered from the power, as all of us are to escape the punishment, of sin! I do not say that we should look less to Christ as a Saviour, but we should certainly look more to him as a sovereign; nor fix our attention on his cross, so much to the exclusion of his crown. We are not to yield him less faith, but more obedience. We should not less often kiss his wounds, but more frequently his feet. We can never too highly esteem his love, but we may, and often do, think too lightly of his law. His Spirit helping us, let his claims on our obedience be as cheerfully conceded as his claim to our faith; so that to our love of his glorious person, and his saving work, we may be able to add with David, "O how love I thy law!"

II. Consider from whom Christ received the kingdom.

1. He did not receive it from the Jews. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

Once, indeed—like stony-ground hearers, like some who make a flaming profession of religion to abandon it almost as soon as they embrace it—the Jews seemed eager to receive Jesus. They even attempted to thrust royal honours on him; "Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king." Afterwards, and by one of those popular movements, which, in the form of a panic or an enthusiasm, rises rapidly, like a flooded river, to sweep in its headlong course stones as well as straws before it, they bore him in royal state on to the capital. Not with sacred oil, or golden crown, or imperial purple, but such royal insignia as the circumstances admitted of, they invested their new-made king. They denuded themselves of their garments to carpet the dusty road. Mothers held up their babes to see him; women and children filled the joyous air with loud hosannas; gray old men, as the procession swept by, shed tears of joy that the long-looked-for hour had come; and, marching with the tramp of freemen—as if every foot beneath its tread crushed a Roman eagle—strong men, with ten thousand stout arms ready to fight for his crown, waved green palms in anticipation of triumph and victory. Thus the living wave, swelling higher as it advanced, rolled on to Jerusalem, bearing Jesus forward to the throne of David. For his mother, for the Marys, for his disciples, for all ardent patriots, it was a glorious hour. Alas! how soon all was changed! It passed like a beautiful pageant—passed like the watery gleam of a stormy day—passed like a brilliant meteor that shoots athwart the dusky sky. A few days afterwards, and Jerusalem, with a crowd as great, presents another spectacle. The stage, the actors, the voices, are the same; but the drama, if I may so speak, how different! This brief act of honour and duty, homage and triumph, is closely followed by an awful tragedy. We have seen tales of horror and shocking butchery shake the heart of a whole nation; but this event struck the insensate earth with trembling, spread a pall of mourning over the whole firmament, filling creation with such signs of bereavement as fill a house when its head is smote down by the hand of death. The tide, which bore Jesus to the crown, turns; and when next we see him, he hangs basely murdered upon a cross. An inconstant people have taken the object of their brief idolatry and, like an angry child with its toy, dashed it on the ground. The only crown our Lord gets from man is woven of thorns. His

Father had said, "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high;" and man found no way of fulfilling that old prophecy, but to raise him, amid shouts and laughter, naked and bleeding, on the accursed tree. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

I know that a nation is not always to be held accountable for the acts of its rulers. A righteous public may have the conscience to disapprove what they have not the power to prevent. But our Lord's death was no act of the government, or simply the act of Pilate, or of the priests and statesmen of the time. It was a great national deed. In that vast assembly which pronounced the verdict, there was certainly not a city, nor village, nor hamlet, nor perhaps even a shepherd's solitary hut among the uplands of Judea, but had its representative. So, when Pilate put the question, it was the voice of the entire country that made itself heard in the unanimous and fatal verdict, "We will not have this man to reign over us"—yesterday we would; to-day we won't; let him die; away with him to the cross. Horrible crime! yet one, alas! in a sense still repeated, often repeated; and for no other reasons than at the first. If Christ would have consented to rule on their terms, the Jews would have made him king. Had he agreed to establish an earthly monarchy, to gratify the nation's thirst for vengeance on their Roman masters, to make Jerusalem the proud capital, and the Jews sole sovereign rulers of a conquered world, they would have revolted to a man. Religion lent its intensity to the burning hatred which they bore against the empire of the Cæsars; and, on such conditions, those who crucified him would have fought for him with the resolution which held Jerusalem, till delicate women devoured their children, and men, famished into ghastly skeletons, met the Romans in battle under a canopy of flames, and in the throat of the deadly breach.

Now, to this day, how many would accept of Jesus as king, would he but consent to their terms—allow them to indulge their lusts, and retain their sins! If, like some eastern princes, who leave the reins of government in other hands, he would rest contented with the shadow of royalty, with the mere name and empty title of a king, many would consent to be his subjects. But be assured that he accepts not the crown, if sin is to retain the sceptre. He requires of all who name his name, that they "depart from iniquity;" and, with "holiness unto the Lord" written on their foreheads, that they take up their cross, and deny themselves daily, and follow him. On this account he is still practically rejected by thousands—whose profession of religion is a name and shadow. How is that old cruel tragedy repeated day by day within the theatre of many a heart! God says, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased;" the preacher brings Jesus forth for acceptance, clothed in purple, and crowned with thorns, and all the tokens of his love upon him, saying, "Behold the man;" conscience is aroused to a sense of his claims; but these all are clamored down. Stirred up by the devil—the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, and all the corrupt passions of our evil nature, rise like that Jewish mob to cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Let the fate of these Jews warn you against their sin; for if God did such things in the green tree, what shall he do in the dry? Be assured that, unless you are obeying Christ as a sovereign, you have never yet known him as a Saviour. Your faith is vain. His cross and his crown are inseparable.

2. He does not receive the kingdom from his own people.

Some have fought their way onward to a palace, leaving the print of a bloody foot on every step that led them to the throne. And what violence or villainy, or both, have won, despotism holds. I could point to lands where the ambitious adventurer who has seized the throne is a tyrant, and his subjects are crouching slaves—as, indeed, men ever will be, who want the backbone of religion to keep them erect. It is God-fearing piety which makes a man the best subject of a good government, and the most formidable enemy to a bad one. Animated by its lofty hopes, sustained by its enduring spirit, a true Christian is not the man to sell his liberties for a dishonorable peace, nor his birth-right for "a mess of pottage."

Our happy land, in contrast with most other countries, presents an illustrious example of a family crowned, I may say, by the hands of the people—called to the throne by the free voice of a nation. The sceptre, which a female hand sways so well and gracefully over the greatest, freest, empire in the world, was, nigh two hundred years ago, wrenched from the grasp of a poor popish bigot; and his successor was borne to the vacant throne on the arms of a people, who, to their everlasting honor, considered crowned heads less sacred than their liberties and religion.

Is it by any such act of his people that Christ has been crowned? Is he in this sense a popular monarch, one raised to the throne by the suffrages of the people? No. Here the king elects his subjects—not the subjects their king; and in that, as in many other senses, he who is both our Saviour and our sovereign says, "My kingdom is not of this world." There have been many disputes about the doctrine of election, and these have given birth to many most learned and profound treatises; the combatants on one side maintaining that in election God had respect to the good works which he foresaw men were to do, while their opponents have, as we think more wisely held, that in all cases his choice is as free and sovereign as when, descending on the plains of Damascus, he called in Saul of Tarsus, the greatest persecutor of his church, to be its greatest preacher. It was on this subject that an aged Christian uttered a remarkable saying, which I may apply to the matter in hand. She had listened with patience to a fine-spun and very subtle argument against the doctrine of a free election. She did not attempt to unravel it. She had no skill for that; but broke her way out as through the meshes of a cobweb with this brief reply, "I believe in the doctrine of a free election; because I know, that if God had not first chosen me, I had never chosen him.

That reply, which was quite satisfactory to her simple piety, and will weigh more with many than a hundred ponderous volumes of theological learning, rests on the depravity of our nature, and applies to our present subject. Aliens by nature to the commonwealth of Israel, and the enemies of God by wicked works, it is absolutely necessary that Christ should first choose you as his subjects, before you can choose him as your king. Hence our catechism says, "Christ executeth the office of a king in *subduing* us to himself, ruling and defending us, and restraining and conquering all his and our enemies." Thus, Prince of Peace though he be, in the Psalms and elsewhere he is pictured forth as a warrior armed for the battle; a sword girded on his thigh, a bow in his hand, zeal glowing in his eyes, he drives the chariot of the gospel into the thick of his enemies. And as our own nation lately, with prayers for their success, sent off her armies to reduce to obedience a revolted province, God, when sending his Son to our world, addressed him as one about to engage in a similar enterprize: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."

Christ does indeed reign by conquest; but his reign is not therefore one of terror. The very opposite. He reigns, as he conquered, by love. For, although in the first instance his people neither choose him, nor call him to the throne afterwards, what king so well beloved? Enthroned in the heart, he rules them through their affections; nor employs any but that which is at once the softest and strongest, the gentlest and mightiest of all forces, the power of love. He subdues, but it is to save you. He wounds, but it is to heal you. He kills, but it is to make you alive. It was to crown you with glory that he bowed his head to that crown of thorns. Other sovereigns may have rendered good service to the state, and deserved its gratitude; but Christ's is the only throne, filled by a living king, who has this at once most singular and sublime claim on the devoted attachment of his subjects, that he died to save them. "I am he that liveth, and was dead."

We are not such subjects as we should be. Yet the world is not to be allowed to forget, that, imperfect as our obedience is, his people are not insensible, nor have they shown themselves insensible, to the paramount claims which Jesus has upon their loyalty. In our eyes, the grace and glory of other sovereigns pales before his—as stars when the sun has risen ; nor is there any one we ever saw, or our affections ever clung to, whom we feel we should love as we ought to love Jesus Christ. True piety is not hypocrisy ; and it is due alike to Christ and the interests of religion, that the world should know that the love his people bear for him is a deeper affection than what the mother cherishes for the babe that hangs helpless on her bosom ; a stronger passion than the miser feels for the yellow gold he clutches. With the hand of the robber compressing his throat, to have his gray hairs spared, he would give it all for dear life ; but loving Jesus whom they never saw, better than father, or mother, or sister, or brother, or lover, or life itself, thousands have given up all for him. Not regretting, but rejoicing in their sacrifices, they have gone bravely for his cause to the scaffold and the stake.

It is easy to die in a battle-field—to confront death there. There, earthly prizes are won—stars, bright honors, are glittering amid that sulphureous smoke ; there, earthly passions are to be gratified—my sister was wronged, my mother butchered, my little brother's brains dashed out against the wall. I am a man, and could believe the story told of our countrymen ; how each, having got a bloody lock of a murdered woman's hair, sat down in awful, ominous silence ; and, after counting the number that fell to each man's lot, rose to swear by the great God of heaven, that for every hair they would have a life. Amid such scenes, with passions boiling, vengeance calls for blood, hurling me, like a madman, on the hedge of steel; and, where the shout of charging comrades cheers him on, the soldier is swept forward on blazing guns and bristling bayonets, in a whirlwind of wild excitement. But, to lie pining in a dungeon, and never hear the sweet voice of human sympathy; to groan and shriek upon the rack, where cowled and shaven murderers are as devoid of pity as the cold stone walls around; to suffer as our fathers did, when, calm and intrepid, they marched down that street to be hung up like dogs for Christ's crown and kingdom, implies a higher courage, is a far nobler, manlier, holier thing. Yet thousands have so died for Jesus. Theirs has been the gentle, holy, heroic spirit of that soldier boy, whose story is one of the bright incidents that have relieved the darkness of recent horrors, and shed a halo of glory around the dreadful front of war. Dragged from the jungle, pale with loss of blood, wasted to a shadow with famine and hardship, far away from father or mother, or any earthly friend, and surrounded by a cloud of black incarnate fiends, he saw a Mahometan convert appalled at the preparations for his torture—about to renounce the faith. Fast dying, almost beyond the vengeance of his enemies, this good brave boy had a moment more to live, a breath more to spend. Love to Jesus, the ruling passion, was strong in death; and so, as the gates of heaven were rolling open to receive his ransomed spirit, he raised himself up, and, casting an imploring look on the wavering convert, cried—"Oh, do not deny your Lord!" A noble death, and a right noble testimony!

Would to God that we always heard that voice and cry, when, in the ordinary circumstances of life, we are tempted to commit sin. I say the ordinary circumstances of life; for it would almost seem as if when we are least tried, we are most in danger. On grand occasions faith rises to the trial; and such is the vitality of christian love, that, like the influence of the wind on fire, the storm seems rather to blow up than to blow out the flame. How often have Christ's people found it easier to withstand on great occasions than on small ones! Those will yield to some soft seduction, and fall into sin, who, put to it, might stand up for the cause of truth and righteousness as bravely as he who, in yonder palace, stands like a rock before the king. Commanded to do what lays Christ's crown at Cæsar's feet, he refuses. It is a thing which, though ready to dare death, he dare not, and he will not do. He offers his neck, but refuses *that*—addressing himself in some such words as these to the imperious monarch: "There are two kingdoms and two kings in in Scotland; there is King Jesus and King James; and when thou wast a babe in swaddling clothes, Jesus reigned in this land, and his authority is supreme."

Would to God that we had, whenever we are tempted to commit sin, as true a regard for Christ's paramount authority! With special reference to our own hearts be the prayer ever offered, thy kingdom come—take to thee thy great power and reign. Ours be thy prayer, O David—"Cleanse me from secret faults, and keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." Alas, how often do we unwittingly, thoughtlessly, rashly, under the lingering influence of old habits, swept away by some sudden temptation, some outburst of corruption, practically deny the Lord that bought us, and yield our members to be the servants of sin! Let us confess it. Often are we constrained to say, with Ezra, when he rent his mantle, and fell on his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord, "Oh, my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Yet let not the worldling go away to triumph over such confessions, and allege that there is no such thing as genuine religion or true love to Christ. This much I will venture to say for his people, and for the grace of God, in which their great strength lies—put us to the test, give us time for prayer and reflection, and there are thousands who, rather than renounce Jesus Christ, would renounce their life, and, with unfaltering footstep, tread the well-beaten path that the martyrs have made to glory. Faith, eyeing the opening heavens, would stand on the scaffold, and say, as she changed a Jewish into a Christian hymn—if I forget thee, O Jesus, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jesus above my chief joy!

The Kingdom of Christ.

(CONTINUED.)

Translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.—COLOSSIANS i. 13.

THERE was an ancient and universal custom set aside, on his coronation day, by that great emperor who bestrode the world like a Colossus, till we locked him up in a sea-girt prison—chained him, like an eagle, to its barren rock. Promptly as his great military genius was wont to seize some happy moment to turn the tide of battle, he seized the imperial crown. Regardless alike of all precedents, and of the presence of the Roman Pontiff whose sacred office he assumed, he placed the crown on his own head ; and, casting an eagle eye over the applauding throng, stood up, in the pride of his power, every inch of him a king. The act was like the man—bold, decisive ; nor was it in a sense untrue, its language this, The crown I owe to no man ; I myself have won it ; my own right arm hath gotten me the victory. Yet, with some such rare exceptions, the universal custom, on such occasions, is to perform this great act as in the presence of God ; and, adding the solemnities of religion to the scene, by the hand of her highest minister to crown the sovereign. It is a graceful and a pious act, if, when religion is called upon to play so conspicuous a part, on such a stage, and in the presence of such a magnificent assembly, all parties intend thereby to acknowledge that crowns are the gift of God, that sovereigns as well as subjects are answerable for their stewardship, and that by Him whose minister performs the crowning act, kings reign, and princes decree justice.

According to that scripture, God sets up one and puts down another, plucks the sceptre from the hand of this man, and gives it to that, and, as our days have seen, makes fugitives of kings, to raise a beggar from the dust and the needy from the dunghill, and set him with princes. And what he does in an ordinary and providential sense to all kings, he did in a high, and preëminent, and special sense to his own Son. The "divine right of kings," with which courtiers have flattered tyrants, and tyrants have sought to hedge round their royalty, is a fiction. In other cases a mere fiction, it is in Christ's case a great fact. The crown that rests on his head was placed there by the hands of Divinity. It was from his eternal Father that he received the reward of his cross, in that kingdom, which, as we have already showed, he received neither from the Jews, nor from his own people. "Yet," says God, "have I set my king upon my holy hill of Sion." And so I remark—

3. Jesus received the kingdom from God.

When we look at the two occasions—both of them great occasions—on which our Lord was crowned, what a striking contrast do they present?

The scene of the first is laid on earth. Its circumstances are described by the evangelists—men who were the sad eye-witnesses of the events that they relate. And when we have found ourselves unable, without trembling voice, and swimming eyes, and kindling passions, to read some of those touching letters which tell how brothers, and tender sisters, and little children, and sweet babes, and beloved friends, were pitilessly massacred—when one remembers how, even at this distance from India's bloody scenes, we were ready to take fire, and swell the cry that called for vengeance on such revolting cruelties, nothing in the Bible seems more divine than the calm, even, unimpassioned tone with which our Lord's disciples describe the events, and write the moving story of their Master's wrongs. Where one would fancy an angel might have been stirred to anger, or would have covered his eyes and wept outright for sorrow, their voice seems never to falter, nor their pen to shake, nor their page to be blotted by a falling tear. Where, we are ready to ask, is John's fond love, Peter's ardent temper, the strong impetuous passions of these unsophisticated men? Nor is there any way of accounting for the placid flow of their narratives, other than the fact that holy men of old spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and were the organs of Him whose complacency no event ruffles, and who, dwelling in the serene altitudes of his divine nature, is raised high above all passion.

Let us look then at the scene of our Lord's first coronation as they present it. Jesus is handed over to men of blood. Behold him stripped of his raiments! His wasted form—for it is he who speaks in the prophetic words, "I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me,"—moves no pity; no more, his meek and patient looks. They tie him to a post. They plough long furrows on his back. And now cruel work is to be followed by more cruel sport. Laughing at the happy thought, his guards summon all the band, and hurry off their faint and bleeding prisoner to some spacious hall. The expression may seem coarse, but it is true—they make game of the Lord of Glory. And when the shocking play is at its height, what a sight there to any disciple who should venture to look in! Mute and meek, Jesus sits in that hall—a spectacle of woe; an old purple robe on his bleeding back; in his hand a reed; and on his head a wreath—not of laurel, but of thorns, while the blood, trickling down from many wounds over his face, falls on a breast that is heaving with a sea of sorrows. Angels look on, fixed with astonishment; devils stand back, amazed to see themselves outdone; while all around his sacred person the brutal crowd swells and surges. They gibe; they jeer; they laugh; some in bitter mockery bend the knee, as to imperial Cæsar; while others, to give variety to the hellish sport, pluck the reed from his unresisting hand, and beat the thorns deep into his brows; and ever and anon they join in wild chorus, making the hall ring to the cry, "Hail, King of the Jews."

The people of Bethlehem, one day as they looked out at their doors, saw a poor widow, bent and gray with grief and age, walking up their street, who was accompanied by a Moabitess—poorly clad and widowed like herself. She is at length recognised. It is Naomi! The news flies through the town. But when her old acquaintances who hastened to greet her, beheld in such poor guise one who had left them in circumstances of envied affluence, happy with a loving husband at her side, and at her back two gallant sons, they were seized with blank amazement. They held up their hands to cry, "Is this Naomi?" And how might the angels, who had adored the Son as he lay in the bosom of the Father, or, singing in the skies of that same Bethlehem, had bent down to gaze with wonder and admiration on the babe of Mary's breast, regard the spectacle in that hall with greater bewilderment—exclaiming, " Is this the Son of God ?"

These twisted thorns formed the crown wherewith " his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals." Nor should we leave that to turn our eyes on another scene, till we have thought with godly sorrow of the sins, and with deep affection of the love, which brought Jesus from heaven to meet such sufferings. In these wounds and blows he took our sins upon him ; in these indignities he was wounded for our transgressions ; he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed.

Turn now from this cruel mockery to the other scene where he received a different crown, in a different assembly, and from very different hands. The cross is standing vacant and lonely on Calvary—the crowd all dispersed ; the tomb is standing empty and open in the garden—the Roman sentinels all withdrawn ; and from the vine-covered sides of Olivet a band of men are hastily descending—joy, mingled with amazement, in their looks. With the bearing of those that have a high enterprise before them, they are rushing down the mountain upon the world—a stream of life which is destined to roll on till salvation reaches the ends of the earth. While the disciples come down to the world, Jesus, whom a cloud received from their sight, goes up to heaven ; and, corresponding to the custom of those olden days, when the successful champion was carried home in triumph from the field, borne high through applauding throngs on the shields of his companions, our Lord enters into glory, escorted by a host of angels. His battle over, and the great victory won, the conqueror is now to be crowned, throned, installed into the kingdom. Behold the scene as revealed by anticipation to the rapt eyes of Daniel :—"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Thus our Lord received the crown from his own Father's hand ; and then, it might be said, was the Scripture fulfilled, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Yet observe, I pray you, that in a sense, he is not satisfied. Is there no satisfying of the greedy grave ? None. Death has been feeding its voracious maw these many thousand years ; and yet, how does it open that wide black mouth to cry, "Give, give, give !" Nor, in one sense, is there any satisfying of the love of Christ. It is deeper than the grave ; and its desires grow with their gratification. Incessantly pleading for more saved ones, Jesus entreats his Father—his cry also, "Give, give." Yes ; he would rather hear one poor sinner pray, than all these angels sing ; see one true penitent lying at his feet, than all these brilliant crowns. In glory, where every eye is turned upon himself, his eyes are bent down on earth. I fancy that amid the pomp of state, and splendid enjoyments of the palace, it is little that the sovereign thinks of the poor felon who pines in lonely prison, crushed and terror-stricken, with haggard face and heavy heart, waiting the death to which the law has doomed him; seldom, perhaps, in fancy, does that pallid wretch intrude himself where all wear smiles, or send a hollow groan from his cell to move one thought of pity, or disturb the sparkling flow of royal pleasures. But Jesus does not forget the wretchedness of the lost amid the happiness of the saved. Their miseries are before him; and amid the high hallelujahs of the upper sanctuary, he hearkens to the groans of the prisoner and the cry of the perishing. And, like a mother, whose loving heart is not so much with the children housed at home, as with the fallen, beguiled, and lost one, who is the most in her thoughts, and oftenest mentioned in her prayers, Jesus is thinking now of every poor careless sinner with his lost soul, and the sentence of death hanging over his guilty head. He pities you from his heart. He would save you, would you consent to be saved. And you, who were never honored with an invitation to a palace on earth, you who are never likely to be so honored, you, by whom this world's pettiest monarch would haughtily sweep, nor deem you worthy of the smallest notice, Jesus, bending from his throne, invites to share his glory, and become with him kings and priests unto God.

III. Let us inquire in what character Jesus holds this kingdom.

It is not as God, nor as man, he holds it; but as both God and man, Mediator of the New Covenant, the monarch of a new kingdom. What he was on earth he is still in heaven—God and man for ever.

Our Lord appeared in both these characters by the grave of Lazarus. "Jesus wept." Brief but blessed record! These were precious tears. The passing air kissed them from his cheek, or they were drunk up of the earth, or they glistened but for a little, like dew-drops on some lowly flower; yet assuring us of his sympathy in our hours of sorrow, their memory has been healing balm to many a bleeding heart. Weeping, his bosom rent with groans, he stands revealed—bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh—a brother born for adversity, for the bitter hour of household deaths, to impart strength to the arms that lay the dead in the coffin, or slowly lower them into the tomb. Yet mark how, by the same grave, he stands revealed in another character, with his divine majesty plainly unveiled. To weep for the dead may be weakness, but to raise the dead is power. Like the clear shining after rain, when every tree seems hung with quivering leaves of light, and the heath of the moor sparkles, and gleams, and burns with the changing hues of countless diamonds, see how, after that shower of tears, the sun of Christ's Godhead bursts forth on the scene, and he appears the brightness of his Father's glory. Men have wept with him; but there, where he stands face to face with grim death, let both men and angels worship him. Death cowers before his eye. He puts off the man, and stands out the God; and the wonder of the dead brought to life is lost in the higher wonder of one who could weep as a man, and yet work as a God.

On the Sea of Galilee also, our Lord appears in both characters. The son of Mary sleeps. His nights have been spent in prayer, and his days in preaching, healing, incessant works of benevolence—he has been teaching us how we also should go about doing good—he has been practically rebuking those whose days are wasted in ease and idleness, or whose evenings, not calm like nature's, but passed amid the whirl of excitement, or in guilty pleasures, sweet slumbers refuse to bless. Now wearied out with labor, the son of Mary sleeps. There is no sleeping draught, no potion of the apothecary that can impart such deep refreshing slumbers as a good conscience and a busy day's good work. Proof of that, stretched on his bare, hard couch, Jesus sleeps—amid the howling of the wind the dash and roar of stormy billows, sleeps as soundly as he ever slept a babe in his mother's arms. He lay down a weary man ; but see how he rises at the call of his disciples to do the work of a God. On awaking, he found the elements in the wildest uproar, the waves were chasing each other over the deep, the heavens were sounding their loudest thunders, the lightnings were playing among the clouds, and the winds, let loose, were holding free revelry in the racked tormented air. As I have seen a master, speaking with low and gentle voice, hush the riotous school into instant silence, so Jesus spake. Raising his hand, and addressing the rude storm, he said, "Peace, be still." The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. No sooner, amid the loudest din, does nature catch the well-known sound of her master's voice, than the tumult subsides ; in an instant all is quiet ; and, with a heave as gentle as an infant's bosom, and all heaven's starry glory mirrored in its crystal depths, the sea of Galilee lies around that boat—a beautiful picture of the happy bosom into which heaven and its peace have descended. "Justified by faith," purchased by the blood of Christ, and blessed with his presence, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now those two natures which our Lord thus revealed on earth, he retains in heaven. And as both God and man, he occupies the throne of grace, and the throne of providence—holding under his dominion all worlds, and principalities, and powers ; for, in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and he has been made Head over all things to the church. This must be so. He *got* the kingdom ; and, simply as God, there could be no addition made to his possessions. Simply as God, he could get nothing, because all things were already his. You cannot add to the length of eternity ; nor extend the measure of infinity ; nor make absolute perfection more perfect ; nor add one drop to a cup, nor even to an ocean, already full.

And as, on the one hand, our Lord did not get this kingdom simply as God, neither, on the other hand, did he receive it simply as man. To suppose so, were to entertain an idea more absurd, more improbable, more impossible, than the fable of Atlas, who, according to wild heathen legends, bore the world on his giant shoulders. How could an arm that once hung around a mother's neck sustain even this world ? But he, who lay in the feebleness of infancy on Mary's bosom, and rested a wayworn and weary man on Jacob's well, and, faint with loss of blood, sank in the streets of Jerusalem beneath the burden of a cross, now sustains the weight of this and of a thousand worlds besides. It is told as an extraordinary thing of the first and greatest of all the Cæsars, that such were his capacious mind, his mighty faculties, and his marvellous command of them, that he could at once keep six pens running to his dictation on as many different subjects. That may, or may not be true ; but were Jesus Christ a mere man, in the name even of reason, how could he guard the interests, and man-age the affairs of a people, scattered far and wide over the face of the habitable globe? What heart were large enough to embrace them all; what eyes could see them all; what ears could hear them all? Think of the ten thousand prayers pronounced in a hundred different tongues that go up at once, and altogether, to his ear! Yet there is no confusion; none are lost; none missed in the crowd. Nor are they heard by him as, standing on yonder lofty crag, we hear the din of the city that lies stretched out far beneath us, with all its separate sounds of cries, and rumbling wheels, and human voices, mixed up into one deep, confused, hollow roar—like the boom of the sea's distant breakers. No; every believer may feel as if he were alone with God—enjoying a private audience of the king in his presence-chamber. Be of good cheer. Every groan of thy wounded heart, thy every sigh, and cry, and prayer, falls as distinctly on Jesus' ear as if you stood beside the throne, or, nearer still, lay with John in his bosom, and felt the beating of his heart against your own.

Jesus Christ, God and man for ever, what a grand and glorious truth! How full of encouragement and comfort to those, like us, who have sins to confess, sorrows to tell him, and many a heavy care to cast upon his sympathy and kindness. Since Mary kissed his blessed feet, since Lazarus' tomb moved his ready tears, since Peter's cry brought him quick to the rescue, since John's head lay pillowed on his gentle bosom, since a mother's sorrows were felt and cared for amid the bitter agonies of his dying hour, he has changed his place, but not his heart. True man and Almighty God—God and man for ever—believer, let him sustain thy cares. Thy case cannot be too difficult, nor thy burden too heavy for one who guides the rolling planets on their course, and bears on his unwearied arm the weight of a universe.

IV. Let me urge you to seek an interest in this kingdom.

Your eternal welfare turns on that. You must be saved or damned; crowned in heaven or cursed in hell. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world;" and blessed be God that it is not. For those very features by which it is distinguished from the world's kingdoms are among its most encouraging aspects to us. They are bright with hope to the chief of sinners.

The poor say there is little chance or hope for them in this hard world. Well, are you poor? I had almost said, so much the better. "To the poor the Gospel is preached." You can get on well enough to heaven without gold. The wealth on which the kingdoms of this world set so high a value, and which, for all their talk of blood and breeding, has bought the coarse plebeian a marriage into proud patrician families, is here rather a hinderance than a help. Has not the Lord of this kingdom said, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God?

In the freest and best governed states, birth, and wealth, and rank, and blood, give to their envied possessors great—often too great advantages. It is the high-born chiefly that approach the person of the sovereign, enjoy the honors of the palace, and fill the chief offices of the state. Royal favors seldom descend so low as humble life. The grace of our King, however, is like those blessed dews that, while the mountain tops remain dry, lie thick in the valleys; and, leaving the proud and stately trees to stand without a gem, hang the lowly bush with diamonds, and sow the sward broadcast with orient pearl. This is the kingdom for the mean, and the meek, and the poor, and the humble! Its King has said, Not many mighty, not many noble, are called, Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

There is no degradation in honest poverty. But are you degraded, debased, an outcast from decent, good society—characterless? Nor does that exclude you from the mercy and grace of God—"Go ye," he said, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Go to the gallows; and preach it to the man with a rope on his neck, and his feet on the drop. Go to the jail; and preach it to the scum of the city. Go to her dens of iniquity; and preach it as freely and fully as in her highest and holiest congregation. Saving, gentle, pitying mercy, turns no more aside from the foulest wretch, than the wind that kisses her faded cheek, or the sunbeam that visits as brightly a murderer's cell as a minister's study. Nay—though the holiest of all kingdoms—while we see a Pharisee stand astonished to be shut out, mark how, when she approaches, who, weeping, trembling all over, hardly dares lift her hand to knock, the door flies wide open; and the poor harlot enters to be washed, and robed, and forgiven, and kindly welcomed in.

Have you done nothing to merit this kingdom? Who has? Did Manasseh? Did Simon Peter? Did Saul of Tarsus? Was it his hands, reeking with the blood of Stephen, that earned for him the saving grace, and the honors of the chief apostleship? Was it for one look of pity, one word of kind sympathy from their lips, that, as his murderers nailed him to the tree, our dying Lord raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do? No. They say, and why may not we, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost?

Yet, though not saved by obedience, remember that submission to Christ's commandments is required of all those who belong to his kingdom; and that the very foundations of spiritual as of common liberty are laid in law—are right government and righteous laws. There is no true liberty without law. Nor can you fancy a more happy condition for a country than that of Israel when, without king or government, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Ours is a free country, for instance; yet where is law so paramount? The baton of the humblest constable carries more authority here than sceptres have done elsewhere. Liberty is not only the birthright of its sons, but should a slave once touch these shores, he drops his chain, and is free as the waves that beat them. Still, it is freedom under, not without, law. He is not at liberty to do what he chooses—he cannot seize my property. He is not at liberty to go where he chooses—he cannot enter the humblest cottage without its owner's consent. He is not at liberty to act as he chooses—commit a private wrong or disturb the public peace. Yet he is free; only, in escaping from a slave-cursed soil to a land of freedom, he has not placed himself beyond authority; but has exchanged lawless oppression for lawful government. So is it with you whom the truth has made free. To you the gospel is "a law of liberty," because, bursting the bonds of sin and Satan, it sets you free to obey the law of God. The believer gladly accepts of Christ's yoke, and delights in the law of God after the inward man, saying, Oh how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day.

In a general sense, we are all the subjects of Christ's kingdom. It embraces the boundless universe. And he who once had not a place wherein to lay his head, now reigns over a kingdom, the extent of which reduces our proud boast to contempt. Tell me that the sun never sets on Britain's empire, and that before he has sunk on one province, he has arisen on another; that sun, which wheels his mighty course in heaven, shines but on an outlying corner of the kingdom over which Jesus reigns. To many of its provinces he appears but as a twinkling star; and in others, lying far beyond the range of his beams, immeasurable distance hides him from view. But no distance hides any part of creation beyond our Saviour's authority. He stands on the circle of the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all.

In a saving sense, however, Christ's kingdom is not without, but within us. Its seat is in the heart; and unless that be right with God, all is wrong. It does not lie in outward things. It is not meat and drink—not baptism or the communion—not sobriety, purity, honesty, and the other decencies of a life of common respectability. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Its grace and power have their emblem in the leaven this woman lays, not on the meal, but in the meal—in the heart of the lump, where, working from within outwards, from the centre to the circumference, it sets the whole mass fermenting —changing it into its own nature. Even so the work of conversion has its origin in the heart. When grace subdues a rebel man, if I may so speak, the citadel first is taken; afterwards, the city. It is not as in those great sieges which we have lately watched with such anxious interest. There, approaching with his brigades, and cavalry, and artillery, man sits down outside the city. He begins the attack from a distance; creeping like a lion to the spring—with trench, and parallel, and battery—nearer and nearer to the walls. These at length are breached; the gates are blown open; through the deadly gap the red living tide rolls in. Fighting from bastion to bastion, from street to street, they press onward to the citadel, and there, giving no quarter and seeking none, beneath a defiant flag, the rebels, perhaps, stand by their guns, prolonging a desperate resistance. But when the appointed hour of conversion comes, Christ descends by his Spirit into the heart—at once into the heart. The battle of grace begins there. Do you know that by experience? The heart won, she fights her way outward from a new heart on to new habits; a change without succeeds the change within, even until the kingdom—which, in the house of God, by the body of the solemn dead, over the pages of the Bible, amid the wreck of health or ruins of fortune, came not with observation—comes to be observed. A visible change appears in the whole man. May it appear in you! then, though the world may get up the old half-incredulous, half-scornful cry, Is Saul also among the prophets? good men shall rejoice on earth, and angels celebrate the event in heaven.

The Translation.

And hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.—Col. i. 13.

All pain, that is passing, and not perpetual, is, in that circumstance, attended with great consolation. This is true of pain, whether its seat be the body or mind; whether it be a dead, or worse still, a living grief; the pangs of disease, the lingering sufferings of a common, or the terrible shock of a violent death. It will soon be over, says a man; and, with that, he bares his quivering limb for the surgeon's knife; or, eyeing the tall black gallows, walks with firm step and erect mein to stand beneath the dangling noose. Saying to himself, It will soon be over, he closes his eyes, casts away the handkerchief, and takes the leap into eternity.

This feeling enters as an element into Christian as well as common heroism. I knew a precious saint of God who was often cast into the furnace, but always, like real gold, to shine the brighter for the fire; and who, having now left her sorrows all behind her, has joined the company of whom the angel said, "These are they which come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore," in the front rank as the highest peers of heaven, "are they before the throne of God." The courage with which she met adversity—one trial after another, shock succeeding shock, billow bursting on the back of billow—was as remarkable as the strength with which, though a bruised reed, she seemed to bear it. Where did her great strength lie? The grand secret of that serene demeanor and uncomplaining patience was, no doubt, a sense of the divine favor. The peace of God kept her heart and mind through Jesus Christ. Yet her sorrows found a solace, life's bitterest hour a sweetness, also, in the simple couplet that was often on her lips—

> "Come what, come may:
> Time and the hour runs through the roughest day."

This prospect of relief, this not distant end of suffering, has often divested even the grave of its horrors. "There'll be no sorrow there." Ah! that sometimes turns our eyes with a longing look on its deep dreamless sleep. Supporting and restraining them by his grace, God with one hand keeps his people up under their sorrows, and with the other keeps them back from anticipating their appointed time. They do not rush on death, nor go unsummoned to the bar of judgment. Unless reason give way, and responsibility cease, they wait his time, and bide it as their own; holding their post like a sentinel who, however cold the night, or fierce the storm, or thick the battle, refuses to desert it till he is duly relieved. They say with Job, All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Yet, with whatever bravery trials are met, and with whatever patience they are borne, there are times when the prospect of relief, which even the grave affords, is most welcome. An object of aversion to light-hearted childhood, and to him who is bounding away over a sunny path thickly flowered with the hopes of spring, the grave is not so to many who have lived to see these fair flowers wither away, beneath whose slow and lonely steps the joys of other days lie strewed, like dead leaves in autumn. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. There is no sorrow for them in the tomb, or beyond it. Thus, from the grassy sod, which no troubled bosom heaves, sorrow plucks blossoms of refreshing odors; thus, weary life grows strong by feeding on the thought of death; thus, to that grave which remorselessly devours the happiness of the ungodly, Christian faith can apply the language of the strong man's riddle, saying with Sampson, when he found the lion that he had rent with a hive of honey within its skeleton ribs, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

Hope may flatter in this common solace of worldly men, that the longest road has a turning. But, turn or not turn, God's people know that it has a termination; and that the weary journey, with its heaviest trials, shall end in rest. But for this, thousands had sunk beneath their griefs. And when calamity came with the shock of an earthquake, and reason sat stunned and stupified on her tottering throne, how often has that blessed prospect restrained man from turning the wish that he were dead into a daring act; and casting life away from him as a burden—one greater than he could bear.

There have been such cases. I remember in one a scene never to be forgotten. It surpassed anything it had been my fortune ever to witness in the most terrible shapes of mortal agony, and anything also which I had ever seen of the power of Christian endurance. To be hanged, or burned, or broken on the wheel, as the martyrs were—some brief hours of torture, followed by an eternity of rest—how the sufferer would have welcomed that! His was no such enviable, happy fortune. Death struck him—like a tree, which first withers at the top—in the head; and, in excruciating sufferings protracted over weary years, he suffered the pain of a hundred deaths. His endurance was heroic, and never failed but once. Once, for pity's sake, for the love she bore him, he implored his wife to tear out his eyes—an expression of impatience, recalled as soon as uttered; regretted on earth, and forgiven in heaven. Now, never as by that bed, where I have seen him turn, and twist, and writhe, like a trodden worm, have I felt so much the power of the consolation of which I speak. Happy was it that religion was not then to seek; and that, beside a wife struck dumb with grief, and little children who stood still and saddened by the sight of a father's agony, I could bend over a pillow, wet with the sweat of suffering, and implore him to remember that these pains were not eternal, and that the Saviour who loved him, and whom he loved, would, ere long, come to take him to himself. In such a scene what comfort in the words—

> "Time and the hour runs through the roughest day."

Nor is this unscriptural comfort. The transient nature of all earthly trials is one important ingredient of that cordial with which Paul comforts sorrowing believers—Our light affliction, which is but *for a moment*, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Nay, may not that have been poured by the angel's hand into the very cup of redeeming sorrows? When our Lord was alone in the garden, and death's cold shadow had begun to fall, and the gloom of the approaching storm was settling down upon his soul, an angel sped from heaven to strengthen him. He finds him prostrate before God. His face is on the ground. In an agony of supplication he has thrown himself at his Father's feet; and, shrinking from the pains of the cross, he cries, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. At that eventful moment, with the salvation of the world hung on its issues, may not the angel, reverently approaching this awful and affecting scene, have strengthened our Saviour, and revived his fainting spirit with this comfort, Lord of Glory, drink; the cup is bitter, but not bottomless? It is no presumption to fancy that, pointing to the moon as she rode in heaven, he had reminded our Redeemer that ere she had set and risen again, his pangs should all be over; and that when next she rose, it should be to shine upon an empty cup, and an empty cross, and Roman sentinels keeping watch beside his sleeping form and peaceful tomb. Something of this, indeed, our Lord seems to intimate in the words he addressed to the traitor's band—"This is your hour, and the power of darkness." They may bind these hands; but they shall soon be free to rend the strongest barriers of the tomb, leaving him to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. With the foul shame of thorns, with spitting, and with scornful rejection, they may hide his glory; but it shall burst forth, like the sun above his dying head, from the shadow of a strange eclipse. Let them put forth their utmost power; its triumph shall be brief—shut up within the limits of a passing hour.

Does not the same idea also appear in the words which our Lord addressed to the traitor at the supper table? As one who, though shrinking from the suffings of a severe operation, feels confident of relief, and braces up his spirit to endurance by setting permanent ease over against a passing pain, Jesus bent his eye on Judas, and said, "That thou doest, do quickly,"—do it, and have done with it ; I know it shall not last ; I am not to be buried but baptized in sufferings ; from the cross where it shall bow in death—exposed on a bloody tree ; from the grave where it shall lie in dust —pillowed on a lonesome bed, shall mine head be lifted above mine enemies round about me ; so that thou doest, do quickly ; I foresee an end of sorrows, and long to enter upon my rest. Now, the relief which death brought to Christ, blessed be God, it brings to all that are Christ's. The passing bell rings out sin with all its sorrows, and rings in eternity with all its joys. And the very same event which plunges the unbeliever into everlasting perdition, ushers the believer into the inheritance of the saints in light. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought ; they shall enter into the palace of the king. Before taking up the subject of the translation, this leads me to remark—

I. That in delivering his people from the power of darkness, Christ saves them from eternal perdition.

The punishment which sin deserves, and which the impenitent and unbelieving suffer, is a very awful subject—one on which I could have no pleasure in dwelling. It is a deeply solemn theme ; a terrible mystery ; one in presence of which we stand in trembling awe, and can only say with David—Clouds and darkness are round about him.

It is a painful thing to see the dying of a poor dog, or any dumb creature suffer : but the fate of the impenitent, the sorrows that admit of no consolation, the misery that has no end—these form a subject brimful of horrors; the deepest, darkest, unfathomed mystery in the whole plan of the divine government. Yet what affords no pleasure may, notwithstanding, yield profit; and that even by reason of the pain it inflicts. And so, in the hope of such a blessed result, let me warn, and beseech, and implore careless sinners to be wise, and consider this solemn matter in the day of their merciful visitation. Better fear that punishment than feel it; better look into the pit than fall into it; better than fill your ears with syren songs of pleasure, listen to this warning voice, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." The chains which bind you are yet but locked, and the gospel has a key to open them. Reject that gospel, and what is now but locked by the hand of sin, shall be rivetted by the hand of death—like the fetters on the limbs of him who leaves the bar to suffer that most awful sentence, the doom of perpetual imprisonment. "As the tree falls, so it lies." "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

People talk about the mercy of God in a way for which they have no warrant in his word; and, ignoring his holiness, and justice, and truth, they lay this and the other vain hope as a flattering unction to their souls. Thinking light of sin, seeing no great harm in it, they judge God by themselves. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," accounts for the manner in which many explain away the awful revelations of Scripture about future punishment, and in the face of such terrible words as these, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," give such a ready ear to the devil's old falsehood, Thou shalt not surely die. The fire, they allege, and are sure, is a mere symbol. Well, just look by the light of that symbol at the condition of the lost. Fire! What does that mean? Take it as a symbol, grant that it is but a figure of speech, still it has a terrible meaning, as will be manifest, if we consider the nature and characteristic features of that element. Let us see.

According to the imperfect science of the world's early ages, there were four elements, of which ancient philosophers held that all things else were compounded. These were fire, air, earth, and water; and from the other three, the first is strikingly distinguished by this peculiar and well-marked feature, that it is destructive of all life. Let us examine this matter somewhat in detail.

1. The element of earth is associated with life. Prolific mother, from whose womb we come, and to whose bosom we return, she is pregnant with life, an exhaustless storehouse of its germs. Raise the soil, for example, from the bottom of deepest well or darkest mine. And as divine truths, lodged in the heart by a mother in early childhood, though they have lain long dormant, spring up into conversion so soon as God's time comes and the Spirit descends, so seeds, that have lain in the soil for a thousand years, whenever they are exposed to the quickening influences of heat, and light, and air, and moisture, awake from their long sleep, and rise up into forms of grace and beauty. Nowhere but within the narrow wall of the churchyard—with its earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust—are death and the dust associated. Even there

how does life, contending for the mastery of this world, intrude upon death's silent domains, and both in the grass that waves above, and the foul worms that feed below, claim the earth as her own! This earth is far less the tomb than a great prolific womb of life. Of its matter life builds her shrines; beneath its surface myriads of creeping things have their highways and homes; while its soil yields bountiful support to the forests, and flowers, and grasses, that clothe its naked form in gayest robes of life and beauty.

2. Air, too, is an element associated with life. Invisible substance, it is as much our food as corn or flesh. Symbol of the Holy Spirit, it feeds the vital flame, and is essential to the existence of all plants and animals, whether their home be the land or water, the ocean or its shores. They live by breathing it, whether it be extracted from the waters by their inhabitants, or directly from the atmosphere by the plants and animals that dwell on the dry land. Ceasing to breathe it, they die. With that groan, or gasp, or long-drawn sigh, man expires. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. And as life exists on air, it exists in it; nor ever presents itself in a fuller, happier aspect, than at the serene close, for instance, of a summer day. The air is filled with the music of a thousand choristers; creation's evening hymn, sung by many voices, and in many notes, goes up to the ear of God; and, while the lark supplies music from the ringing heavens, nature holds innocent revels below; and happy insects, by sparkling stream, or the sedgy borders of the placid lake, keep up their mazy merry dances, till God puts out the lights, and, satiated with enjoyment, they retire to rest, wrapped

round in the curtains of the night. Figure of the truth that in God we live, and move, and have our being, our world itself, with all that lives on it, is a sphere that floats, buoyant and balanced, in an ocean of air.

3. Water, too, is an element associated with life. Fit emblem of saving mercies, so indispensable is water to the continued existence of life, that unless it be furnished by some source or other, all plants and animals must speedily die. Then how does this element, which covers more than two-thirds of the surface of our globe, teem with life! He has not seen one of the wonders of creation, who has not seen a drop of water changed, by the microscope, into a little world full of living, active, perfect, creatures, over whom a passing bird throws the shadow of an eclipse, and whose brief life of an hour or day seems to them as long as to us a century of years. Imagination attempts in vain to form some conception of the myriads that, all creatures of God's care, inhabit the living waters—the rushing stream, the mountain lake, the shallow shore, the profound depths of ocean—from the minutest insect which finds a home in some tiny pool, or its world on the leaf of the swaying sea-weed, to leviathan, around whose mighty bulk, whether in play or rage, the deep grows hoary, and foams like a boiling pot. How soon we abandon the attempt, and, dropping the wings of fancy, fall on our knees before the throne to say, O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.

Mark, now, the broad and outstanding difference between these elements and fire. Earth and life, air and life, water and life, are not, as we have seen, necessarily antagonistic; but fire and life are. Unless under such miraculous circumstances as those in which the three Hebrew children walked unhurt in the furnace, or the mountain bush, as if bathed in dew, flowered amid the flames, life cannot exist in fire under any shape or form. No creature feeds, or breeds, or breathes in flames. What the winds fan, and the soil nourishes, and the dews refresh, fire kills. It scorches whatever it touches, and whatever breathes it, dies. Turning the stateliest tree, and sweetest flowers, and loveliest form of the daughters of Eve, into a heap of ashes, or a coal-black cinder, fire is the tomb of beauty, and the sepulchre of all life; the only region and realm within which death reigns, with none to dispute his sway. And thus the characteristic feature of this element—besides the pain it inflicts—is the destruction and death it works.

Suppose, then, that the fire that is never quenched is but a painted flame—grant that it is nothing but a symbol or figure of the punishment which awaits the impenitent and unbelieving, in what respects have they, who have persuaded themselves of that, improved their prospects? It is, "as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." Although the language of Scripture were figurative, yet expressing, as it does, the utter consumption and death of all hope and happiness, it is not less madness for any one to reject the Saviour, and for the enjoyment of a passing pleasure to brave so terrible a doom. Endless misery—the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched—in whatever shape it comes, is an awful thought. We cannot think of it without shuddering. Oh, why should any hear of it without fleeing instantly to Jesus; for who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning? I do not undertake to defend God's procedure in this matter. He will defend it himself, and one day justify his ways, in the judgment even of those whom he condemns. They shall not have the miserable consolation of complaining that they have been hardly and unjustly dealt with. The sentence that condemns them shall find an awful echo in their own consciences. How they shall blame themselves, and regret their life, and curse their folly—turning their stings against their own bosoms, as the scorpion, maddened with pain, is said to do, when surrounded by a circle of fire!

Before we leave this subject, let us all join in thanksgiving, both saints and sinners. Let the people praise thee, O God; let *all* the people praise thee. Fascinated, bewitched by pleasure, do you still linger beside the pit, notwithstanding, perhaps, that its flames are rising fearfully lurid against the darkening skies of a fast descending night? Be thankful that you are not in the pit: and falling on your knees by its horrible brink, let its miserable captives, who envy you your time of prayer, hear your cry for mercy, and that that gracious long-suffering God, who has preserved you to this day as a monument of his sparing, would now make you a monument of his saving mercy. And how should saints praise him! How should they praise him, who have exchanged the horrible fear of hell for a holy happy fear of God, and—in a good hope through grace, that they have been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son—enjoy a peace that passeth understanding. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Blessed, more blessed than if he had the wealth of Crœsus, the poorest, humblest, weakest child of God, who can say with David—He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. It is beautiful to see a bird spring from its grassy bed, mounting up on strong wing into a morning sky of amber, and ruby, and gold, and sapphir, and to hear her, as she climbs the heavens, sing out the joy which God has poured into her little heart in a thrilling gush of music; but, oh, if God's people through more purity enjoyed more peace of heart, were they as holy, and therefore as happy as they might be, how would angels stay their flight, and pause upon the wing to watch the rise, and listen to the song of him who, as he rises, sings—my soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord."

II. Consider how we are brought into this kingdom.

Translation is the expression used to describe the method. There is a difference between being transformed and being translated; in so far as the first describes a change of character, while the second describes a change of state. These changes are coincident—they take place at the same time; but the transformation is not completed, nor are saints made perfect in holiness, until the period arrives for a second translation. Then those who were translated at conversion into a state of grace, are translated at death into a state of glory. The transformation of the soul into the image of God, and of God's dear Son, begins at the first translation, and is finished at the second. And it is with man as with a rude block of marble. Raised from its dark low quarry-bed, it is, in the first instance, removed to the sculptor's studio. There the shapeless mass gradually assumes, under his chisel, the features and form of humanity—blow after blow, touch after touch is given, till the marble grows into a triumph of his genius, and seems instinct with life. And, now a perfect image, it is once more removed, and leaves his hand to become on its pedestal the attractive ornament of some hall or palace.

Now, it is the change of state corresponding to the removal of the block from the quarry, that we have here to do with. And let us take care that the word employed to describe the change from nature to grace leads to no mistake. It were a great mistake to suppose that God only is active while man remains passive in this work. You may, indeed, translate a man from one earthly kingdom to another, you may carry him, for instance, across the channel which parts Great Britain from France, while his senses and faculties are steeped in slumber. The traveler falls asleep in one country to awake in another; and, conveyed smoothly along the level road or over an arm of the sea—rocked, it may be, into deeper slumber by the gentle motion—he opens his eyes, amid a Babel of tongues, on the strange costumes, and faces, and scenery of a foreign land.

Not only so; but, greater and most solemn change, a man may be translated from this world into the next in a state of entire unconsciousness. As I have seen a mother approach the cradle and gently lift up the sleeping babe to take it to her own bed and bosom, so, muffled in the cloud of night, death has stolen on the sleeper, and, moving with noiseless step across the floor, has borne him off so gently, that, on awaking, he was in heaven, and opened his eyes on the glories of the upper sanctuary ; and when his children, wondering what detains their father from the morning meal, enter his chamber, they find the spirit fled, and, as one who had done his work, his lifeless form resting on the couch in a posture of calm repose. Such sudden transition from time into eternity brings an awful arrestment to a life of sin! The sinner is like some wretched criminal, who has been tracked to his hiding-place. Lying asleep in the arms of guilt, he is roused by rough hands, loud voices, and the flash of lanterns ; starting up, he stares wildly round ; and how pale he turns to see his bed beset, and door and window guarded by the stern officers of justice—they are come to drag him to prison. But to die and not know it, not even to taste death, to be spared the bitter cup, to be exempt from the mortal struggle, to be borne across the deep cold waters asleep in Jesus' arms, to be awakened from nature's unconscious slumbers by strains of heavenly music, and the bright blaze of glory, what a happy close of a holy life!

It is not in this quiet, gentle, placid way, that sinners are translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son ; far otherwise. And in illustration of that, I now remark :

1. That this translation is attended by suffering and self-denial.

Killed by a bullet, prostrated by a blow, deprived at once of consciousness and of existence by means of an opiate or some other narcotic poison, man may die to natural life quite unconsciously. But thus he never dies to sin. Best of all deaths! yet it is attended by a painful, and often a protracted struggle; during which he is as sensible of pain as the victim of a cross, who, when the nails have crashed through nerve, and flesh, and bone, hangs convulsed and quivering on its extended arms. Hence these striking metaphors: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts;" "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." I would not deter you from the cross, or from resolving now, by the grace of God, and aids of the Holy Spirit, to take it up, and deny yourselves daily, and follow Jesus. On the contrary, I say, the crown is worthy of the cross. I have no doubt that there is far more pain suffered in going to hell than to heaven. And, although there were not, how will one hour of glory recompense you for all the sufferings and sacrifices of earth? I only wish to dissipate the delusion under which some apparently live, and, living, certainly perish, that indolence, and ease, and self-indulgence may inherit the kingdom of God. They think, therefore, that they have no occasion to be anxious about their souls; and rest satisfied that it may be, and is all right with them, though they are not conscious of having ever felt any serious alarm, having made any great exertion, or suffered, indeed, any self-denying pains whatever.

Be assured that, as it is among pangs and birth-struggles that a man is born the first time, it is in sorrow and pain that he is born again. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail. hath sorrow, because her hour is come;

but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." May it not be in part with reference to this, that John, speaking of Jesus, said, He that cometh after me is mightier than I—he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with *fire!* To be baptized with fire is another thing from being baptized with water. How often has the water fallen from our hand on the calm brow of a sleeping infant, which, held up in a father's arms, was returned to a mother's bosom perfectly unconscious of its baptism—translated into the visible church of Christ in a state of profound repose. But a fiery baptism! that which symbolises the descent of the Spirit in conversion, implies pain—such convictions of sin and dread of hell, such self-reproach, and deep remorse, as have often risen to agony, and sometimes driven man to the verge of madness. Fire burns the flesh, penetrates to the bone, and dries up the very marrow. Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? If not, how could a soul receive the fiery baptism of the Holy Spirit, and be unconscious of it? Ah, fancy not that it is to sinners only that our God is a consuming fire. He is a consuming fire, not indeed to his people's souls, but to his people's sins. The unholy pleasures and habits that bind those whom he has chosen for himself out of a world that lieth in wickedness, he will burn. Nor are these bonds burned off them in a way as painless as happened to the three Hebrews. They, whom Nebuchadnezzar cast bound into the fiery furnace, were suffering for God, and not for sin. And preserved by Christ's presence, like his people in corresponding trials, they walked right pleasantly on burning coals, and found the flames as fresh as the breath of a balmy morning. If you have never felt pain, be assured that you have never parted with sin. Nothing short of burning out will remove it. Yet, painful as it may be, throw open your bosom for this baptism of fire! Whatever wounds it inflicts, they shall be healed. There is balm in Gilead, and a physician there.

2. In this translation both God and man are active. When the hour of our Lord's ascension had come, he rose from Olivet neither on angel's wings, nor in the prophet's fiery chariot. He put forth no effort. His body, as if belonging to another sphere, floated buoyant, upward through the air, until, as he bent over his disciples in the attitude of blessing, a cloud received him out of their sight. But no man rises in this glorious manner from a state of nature into one of grace; or leaves the horrible pit, for the light, and love, and liberty of a son of God. There is help afforded on God's part; but there is also an effort required on ours. We must climb the ladder which divine love lets down.

The soul is not, as some seem to think, a piece of softened wax, receiving the image of God as that does the impress of a seal. We receive salvation; still, we must put forth our hand for it, as the starving for a loaf of bread; as he who dies of thirst for a cup of water; as a drowning man, who eagerly eyes and rapidly seizes the falling rope—clinging to it with a grasp that neither his weight nor the waves can loose.

"Between us and you," said Abraham to the rich man, "there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." I know that a gulf as impassable and profound divides the state of sin from the state of grace; and that no quantity nor quality of good works that we may attempt to throw in, can form a passage for our guilty feet. Rubbish at the best! how are they lost in its unfathomed depths! lost like the stones which travelers in Iceland fling into those black, yawning, volcanic chasms, which descend so deep into the fiery bowels of that burning land, that no line can measure, and time never fills them. Yet, blessed be Christ's name! the great gulf has been bridged. Redemption, through his blood and merits, spans the yawning chasm. An open way invites your feet. And would to God we saw men seizing that opening and opportunity of escape, as a retreating army makes for the bridge when bayonets are bristling on the heights, and the shot is plunging amid its disordered ranks, and clouds of cavalry are cutting down the stragglers! Oh, what diligence, what activity, what energy, what shouts and cries for help in such a crisis, such a terrific scene! They cast away their baggage; everything is sacrificed for life. Husbands dragging on their wives, fathers carrying helpless children, brother raising up wounded brother, the cry of all is for the bridge, the bridge! And as the iron hail rattles among their flying squadrons, save where the rear-guard faces round to the enemy and gallantly covers the retreat, every man forces on his way; until, the living wave surging on it, the bridge is choked with eager fugitives. Who thinks of sitting down there, and waiting a more convenient season, waiting till the press and crowd is over? They may envy the bird that, frightened from her brood, darts through the sulphureous cloud, and wings her rapid way high over the swollen flood, but who sits down there in the idle hope that God will send some eagle from her rocky nest, some angel from the skies, to bear the loiterer across, and save him all effort of his own? No man. Every man is on his feet. He throws himself into the crowd; seizes every opening in the dense, desperate, maddened throng, to get forward; nor relaxes the strain of his utmost efforts, till he stand in safety on the other side—blessing the man that bridged the stream.

Is not God, it may be said, sovereign and omnipotent? As such, does he not sometimes save those who are not seeking to be saved? and even send them back from church to pray who came to scoff? True. He may set aside the ordinary laws of grace, as he set aside the ordinary laws of nature, when at his bidding iron swam, and flames were cool, and the flinty rock yielded drink, and the blue skies gave not dews but corn, and unstable water stood up in solid walls like adamant. But be it ever remembered, that in the ordinary course of his providence, God works in grace as in nature. To use a common but expressive adage, God helps the man who helps himself. Even the young bird chips its own shell, and I have heard its voice in a feeble cry for liberty before it had burst its prison walls; and what violent exertions have I seen an insect—about to enter on a new existence—make to shuffle off its worm case, and come forth in resplendent beauty to spend happy days in sunbeams, and sleep away the short summer nights in the soft bosom of a flower. Instinct teaches the lowest of God's creatures to exert themselves; and providence teaches man, in the common affairs of life, to exert himself. The blessing is on the busy. He reaps a harvest who tills his field; and sickles flash, and sheaves stand thick where the ploughs have gone. The history even of Christ's miracles is pregnant with the same lesson. Who were the lame he healed, but those who painfully crawled to him on their knees, or crept to him on crutches, or got kind friends to bear them on beds and break through house-roofs, that they might get near the Saviour? Who were the blind whose eyes he opened, but those whose hearts leaped within them, and who leaped to their feet when, by the hum and rush of the crowd, they knew that the Saviour was passing? Be these your pattern. Allow no difficulties about this or that doctrine to hinder you from giving immediate attention and earnest obedience to these plain commandments, Pray without ceasing, Labour for the bread that never perisheth, Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments. and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Why is it that many, that perhaps you, are not saved? Will the Lord cast off for ever; and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Is heaven full? Is there no room for more? Or, has the blood of Christ lost its efficacy, or God his pity? No. It is miserable to see how carefully gold and jewels are preserved, while souls are thrown away, as of no value. Men are not saved; but why? They will give themselves no trouble—take no pains to be saved. This change is indeed a birth; but remember that it is not like the birth of the body —the pangs there are all the mother's. This change is a translation, but forget not that it is not such as Elijah's, when that deathless man had only to step into the chariot, and angels shook the reins, and horses of fire whirled him at his ease through the skies to heaven. I am persuaded that there would be many more saved, if fewer of us abused the doctrines of man's depravity, and God's free, sovereign, saving grace. It is the gospel, that Without shedding of blood there is no remission; it is the gospel, that Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; it is the gospel, that Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; but remember, I pray you, that, according to the same gospel, those who receive are they who ask, and those who find are they who seek. It is to the knocking hand that the door is opened.

Redemption.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.—COLOSSIANS i. 14.

ONE who had been a great traveler, who had visited all the capitals of Europe, who had studied the most famous wonders of ancient art, and, no stranger to nature's grandest scenery in the Old World, had filled his ear with the roar, and his eye with the foaming cataract of Niagara, once declared, in my hearing, that near by the latter and most glorious spectacle he had seen the finest sight he ever saw. He was crossing from the American to the Canadian shore; and the same boat was carrying over a fugitive slave. The slave had burst his chain, and fled. Guided northwards by the pole-star, he had threaded his way through tangled forests and the poisonous swamp—outstripping the blood-hounds that bayed behind him, and followed long upon his track. Now about to realize his long-cherished and fondest hopes, to gratify his burning thirst for liberty, the swarthy negro stood in the bow of the boat, his large black eyes intently fixed upon the shore. She nears it. But ere her keel has grated on the strand, impatient to be free, he gathers up all his strength bends for the spring, and, vaulting into the air, by one mighty bound, one glorious leap for liberty, he reaches the shore, and stands erect upon its bank—a free man.

The liberty for which the slave longed, and labored, and braved so much, is perhaps the sweetest earthly cup man drinks. It has, indeed, been often said, that health is the greatest earthly blessing. It is a precious boon. How did the woman of the Gospels spend all she had in search of it; and how would thousands, now languishing on beds of sickness, and sinking into the grave under an incurable malady, buy this possession at as great a price? Without health, what is money? what, luxury? what, rank and sounding titles? what a crown, if it sits heavy on throbbing brows and an aching head? Yonder poor and humble cottager, browned by the sun, with ruddy health glowing on his unshaven cheeks, who, seated at his simple board, uncovers his head to wipe the sweat of labor from his brow, or to bless the God who feeds him and his little ones, might be an object of envy to many. In vain they court coy sleep on beds of down, and try to whet a failing appetite by costly luxuries—sighing, they say, what is money without health? That speech may come very well from those who never knew what it is to be a slave; but what is health without liberty—health in chains?

We sympathize even with the strong instinctive love of freedom which appears in the lower animals—the bounding noisy joy of the household dog when he gets off his chain; the sudden change on the weary horse, when shaking off his fatigue with his harness, he tosses his head, and, with buoyant spirits and flowing mane, careers amid his fellows over the pasture field. It has moved our pity to see a noble eagle chained to the perch, and, as she expanded her broad sails, turn up a longing eye to the golden clouds her wing shall never more cleave, to the bright blue sky where she shall never more soar. I have felt a deeper sympathy with the free-born denizen of the air, that, pining for his native haunts, declines his food, refuses to be tamed, and, dashing against the bars, dies—strangled in struggles to escape, then with the tamed and gentle captive which takes its food from some fair jailer's hand, and sings the song of golden moors and green woodlands within an iron cage.

Much more, of course, do we sympathise with our fellow-creatures—with the Hebrew exiles, for instance, who hung their harps on the willows by Babylon's sluggish streams, nor could sing the songs of Sion in a strange land; with all those, whether slaves or citizens, who have made the altars of Liberty red with their blood, preferring death to bondage. If I can judge from the interest with which I watched the progress, and, I confess it, all but wished for the escape of a man who, with the officers of justice at his heels, was running a race for freedom, I believe that unless the offence is one which nature taught us to avenge, it would cost a struggle between one's sense of duty as a subject, and one's sympathy with man's love of liberty, to arrest a runaway prisoner. But who would arrest a runaway slave? Who, that ever tasted the sweets of liberty, would not help him? What is the color of his skin to me? He is a brother wronged, a man oppressed; nor were he a man who would not in such circumstances espouse the side of innocent weakness against tyrannous strength, and hide him, and feed him, and lodge him, and help him, from chains, and stripes, and slavery, on to freedom.

If so, who would be himself a slave? What value should we set on health if we had to rise to our work in the rice swamp, in the cane or cotton field, at the sound of the horn, and were driven to it, like oxen, with the crack of the whip? Health! what value would a man set on a life itself, were his children to be torn from his arms, set up to auction, and knocked down to the highest bidder; sold before his eyes to slavery; if he must stand by and hear their mother's piercing shrieks, as with bended knees and outstretched hands she implores, in vain implores, for pity; stand by and hear his own mother cry for mercy, as the breast that nursed him bleeds under the cutting lash; who would value life a straw, if he must stand by, nor speak a word, nor shed a tear, nor from his bursting bosom heave a groan, nor lift a hand in their defense? How sad it is to think that there are lands, governed by Christian men, and in the prostituted name of liberty, where such scenes are witnessed, and crimes so foul are done! It almost tempts one to pray that an avenging Heaven would blight, and wither, and blast the fields that are watered with human tears: "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings." May God give a noble country grace and power to wife from its shield so black a stain!

In these sentiments I have no doubt you all sympathise; but I have to tell you of a worse and more degrading, a more cruel and dreadful slavery. There are among us many greater and more to be pitied slaves. I refer to those who, as the servants of Satan, are sold unto sin. Would to God that we set the same high price on spiritual as we do on earthly liberty! Ah, then what efforts would be put forth, what struggles would be made, what long, earnest, unwearying prayers be offered for salvation! And, when saved ourselves, how anxious should we be for the salvation of others? In the touching narrative of a fugitive slave I have read how, when he himself had escaped, the thought of his mother, a mother dear, and sisters, still in bondage, haunted him night and day, embittering the sweetness of his own cup. He found no rest. Liberty to him was little more than a name, until they also were free. And surely one may wonder how Christians can give God any rest, or take it themselves, while those near and dear to them are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity? And why is it, moreover, that when his servants appear, proclaiming, through Christ, liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, so few hearts leap for joy, and so many hear it—as if they needed it not, heard it not, heeded it not—with calm, cold, frigid indifference? Go, proclaim emancipation in a land of slaves, and the news shall fly like wildfire, sweep on like flames over the summer prairie. At such glad tidings how the bed-rid would leap from his couch, the lame throw away his crutches, the old grow young, the people go mad with joy! Mothers, with new feelings would kiss their babes, and press them to their bosoms; brothers, sisters, friends, would rush into each other's arms, to congratulate each the other that they were free, and, weeping the first tears of joy their eyes had ever shed, would they not make hut and hall, forest and mountain, ring with the glorious name of him who had fought their long hard battle, nor ceased, nor relaxed his efforts till he had achieved their freedom? Jesus! with what jubilant songs, then, should we celebrate thy name, and enshrine thy memory in our best affections! What great, glad tidings these, redemption through thy blood! Oh that God would inspire us with such a love of it, and give us so great enjoyment in it, that with some foretaste of the joys, we might sing this song of heaven, Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

In directing your attention to this subject, I remark:

I. That we all need redemption.

To a man nigh unto death, who is laboring under some deadly malady, and knows it, offer a medicine which has virtue to cure him, and he will buy it at any price. In his eyes that precious drug is worth all the gold on earth. But offer that, which he grasps at, to one who believes himself to be in robust and perfect health, and he holds it cheap. Just so, and for a similar reason, the Saviour and his redemption are slighted, despised and rejected of men. Some of you have no adequate conception of your lost state as sinners, nor do you feel, therefore, your great need of salvation. The first work, accordingly of God's Holy Spirit in conversion, is to rouse a man from the torpor which the poison of sin—like the venom of a snake infused into the veins—produces, to make him feel his illness, to convince him of his guilt, to make him sensible of his misery. And blessed the book, blessed the preacher, blessed the providence that sends that conviction into our hearts, and lodges it, like a barbed arrow, there. For, to an alarmed conscience, to a soul convinced of sin and misery, who so welcome as the Saviour? Let a man, who fancied that he was in no danger, see himself to be in great danger, know that he is a poor, polluted, perishing sinner, lost by nature, lying under sentence of death, deserving the wrath of God, and, like one standing over a volcano, separated from hell only by a thin crust of earth, which, becoming thinner and thinner, as the fire eats it away, is already bending, cracking beneath his feet, ah! he understands the import of the words, Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious. Now, that Christ may be so to you, and that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, may not come to you in vain, let me show how all of us require to be redeemed from the slavery of sin and Satan. And I remark:

1. That this slavery is the natural state of man.

We pity, how greatly do we pity, the mother, as one robbed of a mother's best joys, who knows that the little creature which hangs on her bosom is a slave; and only smiles because unconscious of its sad estate. But this calamity is ours. The progeny of slaves are slaves themselves. And we, having sprung from parents who, in the expressive language of Scripture, had sold themselves for nought, leave our mother's womb in bondage to sin. Accordingly, David says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Let me recall to your recollection the testimony on this subject of one who, so far as civil liberty and Roman citizenship were concerned, was free born. You know how Paul stood on his rights as a Roman. He dared them to scourge him as they would a slave. Yet, speaking of himself, as before God, and in the eye of a holy law, he says, I am carnal, *sold* under sin. And—not to multiply examples—in what terms does he address his converts? "Ye were," he says, "the servants of sin," or as we would express it, ye were the slaves of sin. The slaves! for observe, I pray you, that the word which is there translated servant, means not a servant simply, but a servant who is a slave; not one hired for a period, whom the next term sets free to leave or stay, but one bound, branded with the mark of a perpetual bondage; and so the apostle says, "God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you," "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." David uses stronger terms. In one of his psalms, he uses this very strong expression, "I was as a beast before thee." And, though few of us have the deep sense of sin which that holy man had, there is no child of God who recalls the past to memory—what he was, and how he felt antecedent to his conversion, who looks back beyond that blessed day when the truth made him free, but will be ready to acknowledge that he was a man in bonds. Not master of himself, and free to follow the dictates of conscience and God's word, he slaved in the service of the devil, the world, and the flesh—three hard taskmasters. On that ever memorable day fetters stronger than iron were struck from his limbs.

I do not affirm that the most advanced saint is altogether free from the bondage of sin. No. The holiest believer carries that about with him which painfully reminds him of his old condition. I have seen a noble dog which had broken loose and restored itself to his liberty, dragging the chain, or some links of it, along with him. I have read of brave, stout captives who had escaped from prison, but who brought away with them, in swollen joints or festering wounds, the marks and injuries of the cruel fetters. And do not old sins thus continue to hang about a man even after grace has delivered him from their dominant power? Have you not felt that these called for constant watchfulness and earnest prayer? Who does not need every day and hour to resort to the fountain of cleansing, and wash his heart in the blood of Christ oftener than he washes his hands in water? We need to be renewed day by day; converted, as it were, not once, or twice, but—every day. Surely the happiness of a child of God lies mainly in this, that sin, though it remains within his heart, has ceased to reign there, and that, made perfect at length in holiness, he shall enter by the dismal gate of death into the full and glorious liberty of the children of God.

2. This slavery is the universal state of man.

Both sacred and profane history show that slavery, as it is one of the worst, is one of the oldest human, not humane, institutions. At an early period of man's history, in Cain, he who should have been his brother's keeper became his murderer. And when afterwards man did become his brother's keeper, alas! it was too often as an owner—selling, buying, oppressing him. It is long, very long since men and women, with broken hearts, turned a wishful eye on the grave as a welcome refuge—where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest. But while there might be lands that slavery never cursed, and while there were in every slave land a number who in a sense were free, the slavery of sin spared no land. There are no "free-soilers," so far as sin is concerned. It has exempted no class. The king on his throne, as much as the beggar on his dunghill, is a slave. The loveliest woman as much as the vilest outcast, the proudest peer and poorest peasant, the man of letters and the man so ignorant as not to know the letters, Jew and Greek, bond and free, are all branded and bound; and, like the gang of miserable captives which the slave-dealer is driving to the sea-board, they are moving on to eternity—bound in one long chain with every minor distinction sunk in the one misery, that all are sold under sin. In this, every difference of race, and rank, and color, is merged. Every man's heart is black—whatever his face may be.

It matters little, indeed, nothing before God, whether a man has a dark face or a pale one; but it is all important whether he has a black heart or no—whether our sin-stained souls have or have not been washed white in the blood of Jesus Christ. What avails it that you are not bound in fetters of man's forging, if you are bound in the devil's chain? The difference, yonder, between the white master with his lash, and the poor, trembling, crouching black, over whom he cracks it, is lost in this, that both are under bondage to sin. And I dare to say that of the two, the bigger, blacker, baser slave is he, who, boastful of his vaunted freedom, and proud of his blood and color, holds a brother in chains. The driver is more a slave than the driven; the oppressor than the oppressed. What chain, I ask, has been forged for human limbs so strong, degrading, intensely hateful in the sight of God, as the base cupidity which breeds human beings, like cattle, for the market; and grasps at wealth, although its price be groans and tears and blood and broken hearts?

3. This slavery is the actual state of all unconverted men.

Some are slaves of one sin; some of another; and the forms of slavery are as many and varied as the sins which people are addicted to. Let me give a few examples.

(1.) Some are slaves of gold. How they drudge for it! Their tyrant, the love of money, rules them with a rod of iron. Naturally kind, they feel disposed to assist the poor; but, No, says their master; and with an iron heel he crushes the tenderest feelings of their heart. Visited occasionally with solemn thoughts, and not altogether dead to the claims of Christ, they would part with something worthy of their wealth and of his cause; but what is Christ to Mammon? Again, their master says, No; you must make more money; toil on, ye slaves; you may not trust man, and you cannot trust God; toil on; you must be as rich as that man, and leave a fortune for your heirs to quarrel about over your grave, or squander in folly and dissipation. And thus, blushing at his mean excuse, the poor wretch—for I call him poor who has money which he cannot use—sends Christ's cause away to beg with more success at a much poorer door. Talk of slaves and slave-masters! What bondage like that which condemns a man to do what he condemns himself for doing, to harden his heart against the claims of pity, to deny his own flesh and blood, to lie, cheat, and defraud, or, if not that, every day of his life to run counter to the divine saying, What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? From such bondage, good Lord, deliver us! "Thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness;" "fight the good fight of faith;" and, like gold which a drowning man will drop to clutch the rope flung to him from ship or shore, let go the world. With thy hands set free, lay hold on eternal life.

(2.) Some are the slaves of lust. To what base society does it condemn them? To what act of meanest treachery and blackest villany do their tyrant passions drive them? Think of a man drowning his conscience, and by that deed effacing from his soul the most distinct remaining traces of the image of God! Of all sinners, these are most like their master, the Devil, when he changed himself into a serpent, with its lying tongue and smooth glittering skin, to win a woman's trust. They creep into the bosom which they intend to sting, and put forth their powers to fascinate some happy singing bird, who goes fluttering, but, spell-bound, cannot help going, into their open devouring jaws. Better be a slave and die heart-broken, than be a heart-breaker. The thief—the mean, sneaking, pilfering thief—that steals my money, is a man of honor compared with him who steals a woman's virtue, and robs a household of its peace.

(3.) Some are slaves of drunkenness. Of all slavery this is the most helpless, and the most hopeless. Other sins drown conscience, but this reason and conscience too. More, perhaps, than any other vice, this blots out the vestiges of that divine image in which we were originally formed, and reduces man to the lowest degradation—lower than a beast. Smiting him with the greatest impotency, in such slavery as that of iron to a magnet is the poor besotted drunkard to his cups. He who is a slave to man, may retain his self-respect, cherish his wife, and love his children; and, raising his fettered hands in prayer to heaven, may preserve and present in his very chains the image of God; but yonder wretch, with beggary hung on his back, and dissipation stamped on his bloated face—dead to shame, or, hanging his head, and passing old acquaintances with averted eye—degraded before the world, and expelled from the communion of the church—lying in the gutter—or beating his wife, or cursing his flying children, and in his sober moments cursing himself—ah, he is a slave indeed. What hope for a man who reels up to the bar of judgment, and staggers drunk into his Maker's presence? Let his fate excite your fears as well as pity. I say with the apostle, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Have I not seen many, whose spring budded with the fairest promises, live to be a shame, and sorrow, and deep disgrace? And, though it were revealed from heaven that you yourself should never fall, is there nothing due to others? Does not that bloody cross, with its blessed victim, call upon every Christian to live not to himself, but to think of other's things, as well as of his own? Every man must judge for himself; to his own master he standeth or he falleth. But when I think of all the beggary, and misery, and shame, and crime, and sorrow, of which drunkenness is the prolific mother, of the many hearts it breaks, of the happy homes it curses, of the precious souls it ruins, I do not hesitate to say that the question of abstinence deserves the prayerful consideration of every man; and that, moreover, he appears to me to consult most the glory of God, the honor of Jesus, and the best interests of his fellow-men, who applies to all intoxicating stimulants the Apostolic rule, Touch not, taste not, handle not. In regard to no sin can it be so truly said that our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

(4.) Some are slaves to the opinions of the world. It was the boast of the Macedonian that he had conquered the world; the world can boast that it has conquered them. Subservient to its opinions, theirs is the miserable condition of an unhappy servant, who has to bear in some ill-governed household the caprices, not of one mistress, but of many. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but the fear of man bringeth a snare. How many of the young are ruined, just because they have not the courage to say, Nay, to do what they know to be right—allowing themselves to be laughed out of their virtuous habits, and early holy training. Then, into what misery do we see parents plunge themselves and their families by a course of extravagance, into which they are drawn by the whirpool of fashion. To sacrifice the well-being of your children to a wretched vanity, to do mean or dishonest things that you may appear genteel, to prefer the approbation of the world to that of your own conscience, to incur the wrath of God that you may win a man's or woman's smiles, to stand more in fear of the hiss of dying men than of the deadly serpent—this slavery, common in the world, is one to which Christ's freemen should not yield—no, not for an hour. Hear how God asks, as in surprise, " Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass ; and forgettest the Lord, thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ?"

Yet see, how men of the noblest genius and proudest intellect have crouched, slave like, before the world, laying their heads in the very dust at her feet. When Byron, for instance, stood aloft on the pinnacle of his fame, he confessed that the disapprobation of the meanest critic gave him more pain than the applause of all the others gave him pleasure. Miserable confession, and miserable man ! not less a slave that laurels wreathed his brow, and that a star glittered on his breast. What a contrast do we see in Paul? He was a freeman! Like some tall rock, he stands erect; unmoved from his place, or purpose, or judgment, or resolution, by the storm of a world's disapprobation raging fiercely around him. "With me," he says, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; . . . he that judgeth me is the Lord." What more grandeur is here! What a testimony to the elevating power of piety! What a glorious illustration of the poet's words,

> "He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves besides."

In old times, men and women were said to have sold their souls to Satan, consenting that he should have them at death, on condition of receiving a power to command, in their lifetime, any wealth, any honors, any pleasure their hearts might desire. As the story goes, the devil held them to the bargain; and when they died, the old castle shook, and the screech-owls hooted, and the dogs howled, and the lights burned blue, and the tempest roared, and people crossed themselves as they heard the shrieking spirit borne away through the black night to hell. An old superstition! True; yet fables are often less wonderful than facts; and there are things more incredible in real life than you or I have read in the wildest romance. Did Satan, according to these old legends, drive a hard bargain? With sinners, now, he drives a harder. Deluded, defrauded, cheated, the poor sinner has no lifetime, no season of profit and pleasure. He sells himself for nought. I could fill this house with living proofs of it. They swarm in our streets in their rags and wretchedness.

And what though many, who are living a life of sin, are apparently happy and prosperous? If their hearts had a window whereby we could look within, and see the fears that agitate them, the gnawing of remorse, the stings of conscience, the apprehensions of discovery and impending evil that haunt the steps and cloud the path of guilt, we should conclude that, though there were neither hell nor hereafter, the way of transgressors is hard. From their way I pray all here to turn. Why will ye die? Why? when Christ is willing, wishful, waiting to save. Sin's is a miserable thraldom. If its wretched slaves, you are the objects of deepest compassion. Nor ever more so than when, intoxicated with the pleasant but poisoned cup, you sing and laugh and dance in chains. To men in your circumstances, and with your appalling prospects, how may we apply the words, I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it? God help you! God bring you to a better mind; that, raising your fettered arms and weeping eyes to heaven for help to burst these fatal, accursed bonds, you may be free—blessed with holy liberty, and true peace, and pure pleasure, and lasting joys—redeemed and ransomed by the blood of Christ.

Christ the Redeemer.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.—COLOSSIANS i. 14.

No place touches us with a more melancholy sense of the fleeting nature of earthly glory, than an old deserted castle. All is gone but the main keep. Stoutly battling with time, as one not easily subdued, it stands erect in its ruin amid the grass-green mounds, that, like graves of the past, show where other buildings once have stood. Gray with moss, or mantled with ivy, the strong thick walls are slowly mouldering; and there is deep desolation in these silent courts. No step but our own treads the floor that in other days shook to the dancers' feet; nor sound is heard in halls which once rung with music, and sweet voices, and merry laughter, but the moaning wind, which seems to wail for the wreck around it; or the sudden rush and flapping of some startled bird that flies at our intrusion from her lonely nest. If happily an empty chain hangs rusting in the dungeon where captives once had pined how cold the hearth around whose roaring fires in long winter nights many a tale was told, and many a bright group had gathered, and the mother nursed her babe, and the father told his rapt and listening boys of stirring scenes in flood and field! In the grass-grown court below, where once they had mustered gay for the bridal, or grim for battle, the sheep are quietly feeding. And here on the battlement some pine, or birch, or mountain ash, rooted in a crevice and fed by decay, lifts its stunted form, where the banner of an ancient house floated proudly in days of old, or spread itself out, defiant, as the fight raged around the beleagured walls, and the war-cry of assailants without was answered by the cheers of gallant men within. Now all is changed—the stage a ruin, spectators and actors gone. They sleep in the grave ; their loves, and wars, their fears, and joys, and sorrows—where ours, too, soon shall be—buried in its cold oblivion.

"Their memory and their name is gone,
Alike unknowing and unknown."

And, greatest change of all, the heirs of those who reared that massy pile, and rode helmed to battle with a thousand vassals at their back, have sunk amid the wrecks of fortune. Fallen into meanness and obscurity, as humble rustics, they now, perhaps, plough the lands which once their fathers held.

Such changes have happened in our country. But changes corresponding to these never happened in ancient Israel. It was there, as in the heavens above us, whose luminaries, after a certain period of time has elapsed, always return to the same place in the firmament, and the same relative position to each other. The sun, for instance—although changing his place daily—shall rise and set, twelve months from this date, at the same hour, and appear at his meridian in the same spot as to-day. Corresponding to that, or like the revolution of a wheel, which restores every spoke to its former place, society—whatever change meanwhile took place in personal liberty or hereditary property—returned among the old Hebrews to the very same state in which it was at the commencement of those fifty years, whose close brought in the jubilee. "Then," said Moses, "shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and he shall return every man unto his family."

In consequence either of his crimes or his misfortunes, the Hebrew was occasionally obliged to part with his paternal estate. His was sometimes a still greater calamity, for not only was his property sold, but his liberty. He became the bond servant of some more fortunate brother. So matters stood till the fiftieth year arrived and the jubilee was blown. At that trumpet sound, how fondly anticipated! how gladly heard! the fetters fall from his limbs, and the slave of yesterday is to-day a freeman. At that trumpet sound the beggar doffs his rags, the weary laborer throws down his tools. Marriage bells never rang so merry as that blessed peal; it has changed the serf into a freeholder, a man of substance and position. And, as blown with the breath of liberty, trumpet replied to trumpet, and the sound of the jubilee, rising from valley to mountain, echoed among the rocky hills, and spread itself over the land from beyond Jordan's bank to the shores of the sea, from the roots of snowy Lebanon to the burning desert, every man bade adieu to beggary, and wandering and exile. Like parted streams, divided families were reunited; long alienated possessions were restored to their original owners, and amid universal rejoicings, feastings, mirth, music and dances, every man returned to spend the rest of his days in his father's house, and when he died to mingle his own with ancestral dust. What a singular institution! As a civil arrangement, acting as a check both on excessive wealth and on excessive poverty, it was without a parallel in any ancient or modern nation. But it was more—it was a symbolical institution. More than in many respects a great social blessing, it had a deep, holy, spiritual meaning. Celebrated on the great day of atonement—that day when the goat, typical of Jesus, bore away the sins of the people—it was the symbol of a better restitution, and a better redemption; and was, in fact, a striking, very beautiful, most benignant figure of the redemption which we have through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins.

Before turning your attention to the redemption, of which that jubilee was such a remarkable figure, let me, by way of warning, remark:

I. Our redemption is not, like that of the Hebrews, a simple matter of time.

Every fifty years, and in certain cases every seven years, redeemed the Hebrew, and restored him to the enjoyment of his property. "If thy brother," said God, "an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years, then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty." Thus, time set free the Hebrew slave, and as its finger moved over the face of the sundial, pointed him onwards to freedom. Everywhere, and in its most ordinary course, time works many changes, the young grow old, and raven locks grow gray; the poor rise into wealth, while the rich sink into poverty; old families disappear, and new ones start up like mushrooms. And, constantly changing the condition of society, as he turns the wheel of fortune, Time is altering the form even of this great globe itself. The proudest mountains are bending before his sceptre, and yielding to his silent but resistless sway. Nor is there a tiny stream that trickles over the rock, and often hid under the broad fern, and nodding grasses, and wild flowers that grow on its narrow banks, betrays itself only by the gentle murmur with which it descends to join the river that receives its tribute, and rolls it onward to the ocean, but—teaching us in the highest matters not to despise the day of small things—is wearing down the mountain and filling up the sea. Through the agencies of heat and cold, dews and rains, summer showers and winter snows, Time is remodelling the features of our world, and—perhaps in that symbolizing the onward progress and future condition of society—reducing its various inequalities to one great common level.

But amid these changes shall years change, as a matter of course, the condition of a sinner? Shall they redeem him, for instance, from his slavery, or even relax the chains of sin? In the course of time you will grow older, but not of necessity better. On the contrary, while the Hebrew slave was, by every year and day he lived, brought nearer to redemption, and could say, on such a day and at such an hour I shall be free, it is a solemn and awful fact, that the longer you live in sin, the more distant, more difficult, more hopeless does your salvation become. "The last state of that man is worse than the first." Let us not flatter ourselves with the very common hope, I shall grow better as I grow older. That is very unlikely to happen. The unconverted are less likely to be saved at the jubilee age of fifty than at five-and-twenty, in their seventieth than in their seventh year. "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Do you say, in reply, But what then am I to do? Can I redeem myself? Assuredly not. But are we, because we can be redeemed only through the blood of Christ, to sit still; as if that redemption would come like a jubilee in the common course of providence, or time, or nature? No. We are to be up and doing, since, in a sense, it is true of a soul's as of a nation's liberty,

"Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow,"

I do not say that we are to rise like an oppressed nation which wrings its liberties from a tyrant's hand, nor that we can purchase redemption, as we bought with our millions the freedom of West Indian slaves; nor that through works of righteousness that we do or have done, we can establish any claim whatever to its blessings. By care and industry you may acquire goods, not goodness; money, but never merit—merit in the sight of God. And yet I say, in God's name, "labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;" "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" "give diligence to make your calling and election sure;" "take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul." There are various ways of being diligent. One man, seated at the loom, is busy with the shuttle; another, at the desk, with his pen; another, in the field, at his plough; another bends to the oar, and, ploughing the deep, reaps his harvest on the stormy waters; another, seen through the smoke of battle, is straining all his energies on the bloody field, winning honors with the bayonet's rush and at the cannon's mouth. And, though men may call him idle, yonder poor beggar, who, in orphan child or infirm old man, claims our pity and reproves our indolence, is busy also, diligent as the others. His hand is not idle, it is busy knocking; nor are his feet, they bear him weary from house to house, from door to door; nor is his tongue, it pleads his poverty, and tells his tale of sorrow; while, pressed by necessity and earnest of purpose, out of his hollow eyes he throws such looks of misery, as move compassion and melt the heart.

And such as that suppliant's, along with the use of other means, are the labors, the diligence, to which God's gracious mercy and your own necessities call you. Unable to save yourselves, it is yours to besiege with prayers the throne of grace. Learn from Simon Peter what to do, and where to turn; not Peter sleeping in the garden, but Peter sinking in the sea. One who in his boyhood had learned to breast the billow, and feel at home upon the deep, he makes no attempt to swim; the shore lies beyond his reach, nor can the boldest swimmer live amidst these swelling waters. His companions cannot save him; their boat, unmanageable, drifts before the gale, and they cannot save themselves. He turns his back on them. He directs nor look nor cry to them, but fixing his eyes on that divine form which, calm, unmoved, master of the tempest, steps majestically on from billow to billow, the drowning man throws out his arms to Jesus, and cries, "Lord, save me!" Did he cry in vain? No more shall you. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost; nor did he ever say unto one of the sons of men, Seek ye me in vain. He offered his soul for sin, and came to redeem us from all iniquity. Let us now

II. Consider Christ as the Redeemer; not as *a* Redeemer, but *the* Redeemer.

There is no other. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." All the types and symbols of the Saviour teach you this. There was one ark in the flood—but one; and all perished save those who sailed in it. There was one altar in the temple—but one; and no sacrifices were accepted but those offered there—"the altar," as the Bible says, that "*sanctified* the gift." There was one way through the depths of the Red Sea—but one; and only where the water, held back by the hand of God, stood up in crystal walls, was a passage opened for those that were ready to perish. And even so, there is but "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" as our catechism says, "The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ."

This truth is, in a certain sense, and to some extent, acknowledged by all churches which call themselves Christian. They all profess to give Jesus the honors of salvation; not excepting, on the one hand, those which, denying the divinity of our Lord and the doctrine of the atonement, extract its vitality from the Gospel; nor, on the other hand, those Greek and Roman churches, which, by their additions and traditions, have buried the Rock of Ages beneath a great heap of rubbish. While, however, they appear to regard our Lord Jesus Christ as the Redeemer, and so seem to travel on in company, no sooner is the question started, in what sense he is a Redeemer, than we arrive at a point where they take different paths, and are led, as they advance, wider and wider asunder. That question introduces us, in fact, into a great controversy. I do not intend to enter into it; but I will affirm, that whether the weapons were sword, pen, or tongue, no conflict that affected the sacred cause of liberty, the rights of man, the honor or interests of nations, ever involved such important, vital, transcendent interests, as are staked in the battle that has been waged around Christ's cross, and about the question, how he saves, in what sense he is a Redeemer.

The first and most notable champion who appeared on the field was the apostle Paul; and as, panoplied from head to heel in the armor of God, he stalks into the arena, and, looking undaunted around him, is ready to fight and to die for the truth, observe the motto on his battle-shield, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." It is not simply Jesus Christ; though given by an angel and full of meaning, that was a great name. Nor is it Christ come, nor Christ coming, nor even Christ crowned; but Christ dying on a cross, "Christ, and him crucified." Life to sinners through a Saviour's death, salvation by substitution, redemption through blood—that blood the ransom and Jesus the Redeemer—was the substance of all Paul's sermons, the theme of his praise, the deepest-rooted and most cherished hope of his heart. He lived and died in that faith; and, though that tongue of power and eloquence be now silent in the grave, he proclaims to listening angels in heaven what he preached to men on earth. He proclaims it, not in sermons, but in songs; for in that serene and better world, where no storms disturb the church, nor controversies rage, nor clouds obscure the light, they sing, salvation by the blood of Christ. May we cast away all other hope!—and, with our whole hearts embracing that, we shall one day join the vast congregation whose voices fell on John's ear as the sound of many waters, while in harmonious numbers and to golden harps they sung before the throne, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

And for more fully understanding and appreciating this doctrine, I remark—

1. Christ does not redeem us, as some say, by simply revealing the truth—save us by merely as a prophet shewing the way of salvation.

The pathways on the deep along our rugged coasts, as well as our streets, are lighted; and yonder, where the waters fret and foam and break above the sunken rock, the tall light-house rises. Kindled at sundown, it shines steady and clear through the gloom of night, warning the seaman at the wheel of the danger he has to avoid, and shewing him the course he has to steer. Now he who reared that house and kindled its blessed light, and thus saves many a bark from shipwreck, many a sailor from a watery grave, may be called a saviour. In one sense he is the saviour of all who, bravely ploughing their way through the black midnight over the stormy deep, hail that light as it rises on them like a star of hope—and, seeing it, know how to steer, to take the roads, to clear the bar, to beware the reef, and bring their bark in safety to the desired haven. But if Christ is a Saviour only in that sense, simply because he brought life and immortality to light, then he is not the only Saviour. From the "Sun of Righteousness" he changes into a star, and in that heaven, where he shone without a rival, he takes his place but among the luminaries of the church; one of many, he is only a pure and bright and beautiful star in that brilliant constellation, which is formed of Moses, the prophets, those seers and sages and inspired apostles, by whose voices and pens, in the days of old, God communicated his will to man.

Many of those, indeed, who were inspired to reveal the will of God for the salvation of men, had more to do instrumentally in revealing that will than Jesus Christ. No book bears his name; he wrote no epistle, and the truths that actually dropt from his lips, so far as they are recorded, form but an insignificant portion of those Holy Scriptures which are our chart and charter. Yet who but he is set forth as *the* Redeemer and Saviour of sinners? Where is Moses represented as such? or David? or Isaiah? or Paul? Where is it said, Believe on Paul, and thou shalt be saved? whosoever believeth on Paul or Peter hath everlasting life and shall never perish? Nevertheless, compared with our Lord Jesus Christ, see how much Paul did in actually revealing the will of God to men. Jesus preached three years, but Paul thirty. Jesus preached only to Jews, but Paul to Jew, and Greek, and Roman, Parthian, Scythian, barbarian, bond and free. Jesus numbered his converts by hundreds, Paul his by thousands. Jesus confined his labors to the narrow limits of Palestine; Paul overleaped all such bounds, he took the wide earth for his field, and flying as on angel's wings, he preached the Gospel alike to the bearded Jew, the barbarians of Melita, the philosophers of

Athens, and in the streets and palaces of Rome, to the conquerors of the world. Yet look at this great apostle; he lies as low at Jesus' feet as the woman who washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. He wore chains for Christ, and gloried in them; nor was ever queen so proud of her diamond coronet, nor man in office of his chain of gold, as he of the iron manacles he wore for Christ, and boldly shook in the face of kings. To serve the cause of Jesus he could submit to be beaten, and scourged, and starved, and stoned, and cast at Ephesus to hungry lions; but one thing he could not bear—grief and horror seize him when he finds himself set on a level with his master. To a divided church, rent by factions and full of partisanship, where one is crying, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, and a third, I am of Cephas, and a fourth, I am of Christ, he turns round with indignation to ask, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" In whatever others may glory, he ascribes all the glory of redemption to the cross of Christ, and, rebuking that party spirit and respect for human authority which is still too prevalent among us, he exclaims, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. Our Lord does not redeem us, as some say, simply by his example.

That man is, in a sense, my saviour, who leads me safely along any dangerous path. The brave guide, for instance, who, high up on the beetling precipice, appears to shuddering spectators below like an insect creeping along its face, who now plants the point of his foot in the crevice, now poises himself on that rocking stone, now, laying strong hand on a friendly root, with a thousand feet beneath, swings himself round this dangerous corner, now, with arms stretched out, and with more than a lover's eagerness, embraces the rock, and now steps lightly along the fallen tree that bridges the fearful chasm, and so, going before, shows me where to turn, and what to hold by, I regard—and on looking back at that tremendous path, and horrible abyss — regard with gratitude as my saviour. But for him, I had never achieved the passage; my body had been mangled, and my unburied bones left to bleach in the depths of that dark ravine.

And in a corresponding way, according to some, our Lord redeemed us. He set us such an example of every virtue, of patient endurance, of living, suffering, dying, that we also, by closely following his footsteps, may reach the kingdom of heaven. Alas for our safety! farewell to the hope of heaven, a last farewell, if it turn on that. What a delusion! God knows, if it had not been for the everlasting arms that caught us when falling, and often raised us when fallen, and for the overflowing love that has pardoned a thousand and a thousand sins, I, and you, and all, had perished long ere now. We had never stopped falling, till, like a stone that, rolling down the hill-side and bounding from crag to crag, at length, with a sullen sound, plunges into the lake, we had been lost in hell. Follow his example! Tread his footsteps! Live as he lived! Walk as he walked! Who is sufficient for these things? No woman ever bore such a son as Mary's; for in him a clean thing came out of an unclean. Death has darkened many a house and church and land, but never extinguished such a light as was quenched in blood on Calvary; it was as if he had raised his arm and plucked, not a star, but the sun from heaven. This earth was never trodden by such feet as walked the Sea of Galilee, and were nailed upon the cross. For more than thirty years they trod earth's foulest paths, and, when heaven received him back, had neither spot nor stain. And as he lay dead three days in a grave, which, respecting its prisoner, did not dare to mar his face, or touch him with its corrupting finger, so in a world that has been the grave of virtue and holiness and piety, he passed three-and-thirty years amid corruption uncorrupted, a friend to harlots, a guest of publicans, associated with sinners, yet sinless, holy, harmless, undefiled—like oil among water, separate from sinners.

Again, I ask, who is sufficient for these things? What man liveth and sinneth not? Who has not often to cry—"Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not; and, when once down, what stops him from going straight down to hell, but the promise, which faith catches and holds and hangs by, "I will heal their backslidings, and love them freely?" We should certainly attempt always to follow Jesus, to walk as he walked, to speak as he spake, to think as he thought, and to mould our whole conduct and conversation on the pattern that he hath left us; yet our best attempts will leave us more and more convinced that our only hope for redemption, salvation, forgiveness, lies in the mercy of the Father and the merits of the Son. Pray for and make sure of an interest in these, for even after we have been made new creatures in Jesus Christ, the most that we can do—nor that without the aids of the Holy Spirit—is to creep along the path which the Saviour walked, and leave the mark of our knees where he left the prints of his feet.

3. Christ has redeemed us by suffering in our room and stead. Our ransom was his life, the price of our redemption his blood.

"Without shedding of blood is no remission;" "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." This is the grand truth, the central doctrine, the culminating point of the Gospel. It rises lofty above all others. And, as some Alpine summit, crowned with snows and piercing the blue skies, rises up bright and clear, to catch the rays of the morning sun, and be descried from a far long distance, so the doctrine which cheers us, caught the eyes and revived the hearts of Adam and Eve amid the withered bowers of Eden. The promised seed was to bruise the serpent's head, and that serpent was to bite His heel. There was to be salvation, but salvation through suffering; and, as could only be, salvation through the suffering of a substitute. It was as a *substitute* for sinners that Jesus was daily set forth in the sacrifices of the Jewish altar; and to one of these, as very graphically exhibiting the connection between bloodshed and sin forgiven, let me request your attention.

The offering I refer to was made on the greatest of all ceremonial occasions—the day of atonement. Two young goats, kids of the goats, are selected from the flock, and presented before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle. These young, innocent, spotless creatures, standing there in the sight of the silent solemn multitude, are a double type of Jesus, when, in the councils of eternity, he presented himself before Jehovah, saying, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." The lot is cast—one for the Lord, the other for the scapegoat—to determine which shall represent our Saviour in the act of his death, and which in the fruit of his death, namely, the bearing away of the sins of the people. The first falls as a sin offering. The High Priest, having caught his flowing blood in a golden bowl, enters within the veil, and, alone, sprinkles it upon and before the mercy-seat. Coming forth, he goes up to the living goat; standing over it, he lays his hands upon its head; and, amid solemn silence, confesses over the dumb creature all the iniquities, and transgressions, and sins of the children of Israel. The prayer finished, that goat bears on its devoted head the guilt of the people as it has been ceremonially transferred from them to it by these blood-stained hands, and that holy prayer. And now, observe the act which foreshadowed how Jesus, by taking our sins upon him, bore them all away. The congregation opens, the vast crowd divides, forming a lane that stretches away right from the tabernacle into the boundless desert. While every lip is sealed, and every eye intent upon the ceremony, a man steps forth—a "*fit*" man; and, taking hold of the victim, he leads it on and away through the parted crowd. All eyes follow them. Amid the haze of the burning sands and distant horizon, their forms grow less and less, and at length vanish from the sight. He and that goat are now alone. They travel on and further on, till, removed beyond the reach of any human eye, far off in the distant wilderness, nor man nor house in sight, he casts loose the sin-laden creature. And when, after the lapse of hours, the people descry a speck in the extreme distance, which draws nearer and nearer, until, in a solitary man who approaches the camp, they recognise the *fit* man who had led away the sin-laden victim, the people see, and we in figure also see, how our Lord, when he was made an offering for sin, took the load of our guilt upon him—bearing it away, as it were, to a land that was not known. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Let faith seize the reality of which that ceremony was the shadow. Behold Christ suffering for his people, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God! He bore our sins away on his head in that thorny crown, and on his shoulder in that heavy cross; and, most of all, amid that awful darkness, when he was indeed alone, and, cast off by God as well as man, his heart broke in that awful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Relieved thus from his load of guilt, knowing that all his sins were then atoned for, and, in the witness of God's Spirit with his own, possessing evidence that they are now forgiven, how happy should the believer be! Envying no man's state, and coveting no man's goods, with God's peace in our heart and heaven in our eye, oh, may it be ours to say from sweet experience, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

The Image of God.

Who is the image of the invisible God.—COLOSSIANS i. 15.

"I AM an old man, and have never seen God," said a gray-haired Indian to Sir John Franklin, when that distinguished traveler was pursuing one of his earlier expeditions into those arctic regions where he first won his fame, and afterwards found his grave. From that fact the old man argued that there is no God; since, if there were any such being, he must have seen him sometime, and met him somewhere, in the course of his long life and wide wanderings. Stupid savage! He would not believe in God because he had never seen him. Yet he believed in the wind, which he had never seen, as it howled along the dreary waste, or whirled the snow-flakes, or roared through the pine-forest, or swept his light canoe over foaming billows, or roused the sea to burst its wintry chains, and float away from silent shores their fields and glittering bergs of ice.

We believe in many things we never saw, on the evidence of other senses than that of sight. We believe in music; in invisible voices, that roll their waves of sound upon the ear, and by means of which our spirits, shut up within gross, material forms, telegraph their thoughts and hold intercourse, one with another. We believe in invisible odors—the fragrance of rose or lily, and the sweet-scented breath of a thousand other flowers. Nay, we believe in the existence of what we neither hear, nor see, nor taste, nor smell, nor touch. Though ignorant of what they are, and where they are, we believe in the life that animates our mortal bodies, and in the immortal spirits that inhabit them. Thus, with such knowledge and education as we have, there is no danger of our falling into the mistake of Franklin's savage, or doing anything so foolish and absurd as to doubt the being of God because his person is invisible. Still, though that circumstance may not lead us to deny his existence, alas! how often does it tempt us, the best of us, to forget it! And as to the ungodly, God is not in all their thoughts. "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear shall he not hear? He that formed the eye shall he not see? Let me, therefore, embrace the opportunity which the text presents, of dwelling for a little on that feature of the Divine Being, of which the apostle speaks, in setting Christ before us as the visible image of an invisible God.

I. I would warn you against allowing God to be out of mind because he is out of sight.

This is a fault to which we are all prone, a danger to which our very constitution exposes us. Hence the necessity of striving, making an earnest effort to "walk by faith, not by sight." How difficult an acquirement! for we are to a great degree the creatures of sense. The sight of some companion of our boyhood, from whom many years and wide seas have parted us, how that recalls old days, and rekindles affections that had been slumbering in their ashes! We light on a letter written by a kind hand long mouldering in the dust, how that opens up wounds which time seemed to have healed, and renews forgotten griefs! I have known a man far advanced in life, and standing, ripe for heaven, on the edge of another world, so moved by the picture of an early love, that, as he gazed on it, fountains long sealed burst open; and over the youthful and beautiful image of her whom the grave had long held for years in its cold embraces, he bowed his gray head, and wept and sobbed like a woman. And what effect mere sight has on other passions may be seen in the rout of yon battle-field, where the column that has stood the volleying shot, and faced the flashes of death so long as he came invisible in a shower of bullets, wavers, staggers, reels, breaks, scatters like a flock of sheep. The charge is made. They cannot stand *seen* death—this line that, with knit brows, and rapid rush, and terrible cheers, hurls itself on their ranks, their gleaming bayonets a horrid hedge of steel.

And is it not just because we are chiefly affected by the visible, that the grave comes to be the land of forgetfulness? The dead, being out of sight, are jostled out of mind; thrust off like withered leaves from beech or oaken hedge by the green growth of spring; buried in our hearts as in their tombs. It may be that they are now and then recalled, yet widows forget their husbands, and wear their weeds sometimes longer than their griefs; parents forget their children, the living pushing out the dead; and churches forget their ministers; and nations forget the patriots whom they have entombed in marble and honored with statues. Memory grows treacherous. "Our fathers, where are they? the prophets, do they live for ever?" When some great man dies in church or state, he falls like a mass loosened from the mountain crag, which, bounding into the quiet lake, produces a great commotion, echoing among the silent hills, and surging its waves up along the troubled shore; but how soon all is quiet again! He goes down, like a stately ship, with colors flying and sails all set; and for a time society is widely affected. The event produces a great impression; the public mind is agitated to its lowest depths; and, as he sinks into the grave, he draws men's thoughts after him as that ship sucks in all that floats nigh the whirlpool which she forms in her descent. But it is with him as with her. Once buried beneath its waters, how soon the sea is still again, and returns to its former calmness! The grave closes over the mighty dead; and new events and new persons, though they may be much inferior, engross the public attention, just as the interest of men comes to be fixed more on the little boat that floats its living crew on the placid waters, than on the gallant ship that, with all her guns and brave men, lies buried in the depths below.

And so it is in religious things, in those matters which affect our eternal well-being. What is out of sight is very apt to be out of mind. Let this teach you to take all the more heed to live by faith in the invisible. Consider how, with all their glare and show, things seen are paltry, passing, the least of things; and that grandeur and endurance belong to the unseen. The soul is unseen; precious jewel of immortality, it lies concealed within its fragile fleshly casket. Hell and heaven are unseen; the first sinks beneath our sight, the second rises high above it. The eternal world is unseen; a veil impenetrable hangs before its mysteries, hiding them from the keenest eye. Death is unseen; he strikes his blow in the dark. The devil is unseen—stealing on us often unsuspected, and always invisible. And as is our deadliest foe, so is our best and trustiest, our heavenly Friend. Jesus is an invisible Saviour; Jehovah is an invisible God.

"No man hath seen God at any time;" yet why should that be turned into a temptation to sin? I think it should rather minister to constant watchfulness and holy care. How solemn the thought, that an invisible being is ever at our side, and, watching us, recording with rapid pen each deed and word, every desire that rises, though it be to burst like an air-bell, every thought that passes, though on an eagle's wing. We cannot shake off the presence of God; and when doors are shut, and curtains drawn, and all is still, and darkest night fills our chamber, and we are left alone to the companionship of our thoughts, it might keep them pure and holy to say, as if we saw two shining eyes looking on us out of the darkness, "Thou, God, seest me." The world called him mad who imagined that he saw God's eye looking on him out of every star of the sky, and every flower of the earth, and every leaf of the forest, from the ground he trod upon, from the walls of his lonely chamber, and out of the gloomy depths of night. Mad! It was a blessed and holy fancy. May God help you to feel yourselves at all times more in his presence than you are at any time in that of your fellow-men! How promptly then would every bad thought be banished; what unholy deeds be crushed in the desire, nipped in the bud, strangled in the birth; what crimes remain uncommitted; how feeble would the strongest temptations prove; what a purity, nobility, loftiness, holiness, heavenliness, would be imparted to your whole bearing and conversation! There would be a dignity in the humblest Christian's mien and looks, such as rank never wore, and courtly training never bred; and we should guard our hearts with such a door as stands at the threshold of heaven, this written above it in the blood of Calvary, Here "there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth."

II. The visible revelations of the Invisible, which are recorded in Old Testament history, were most probably manifestations of the Son of God.

Out of a number of cases where God is said to have been seen, let me select a few.

To-morrow Esau and Jacob are to meet. There was a quarrel of long standing between them, which had all the bitterness of a domestic feud. Jacob had foully deceived and deeply injured his brother. He had not seen Esau for many years, and, dreading his vengeance, he now heard of his approach at the head of four hundred men, with fear and trembling. Greatly alarmed, he cried, God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, the mother with the children. Pattern to us when temptation threatens, or dark misfortunes lower, Jacob, having done all that man's wisdom could devise, or his power could do in the circumstances, flies for help to God. He will prepare for to-morrow's trial by a night of prayer. Sending off his wives and children across Jabbok's stream, to place them as far as possible out of danger, and leave these innocent ones to forget it in sleep's sweet oblivion, he seeks himself a solitary spot. With deepest silence all around him, and the bright stars above his head, he is on his knees alone with God. Suddenly, as if he had approached with the stealth of a creeping savage, or had sprung from out the ground, some one grasps him. Folded in his arms, Jacob cannot cast him off. Now it becomes a struggle for the mastery. Locked together, they wrestle in the dark ; they bend ; they try each to throw the other ; and, in some mysterious commingling of bodily and spiritual wrestling, the night passes, and the conflict lasts till break of day. Let me go, said the other, whose eye had caught the gleam of morning, for the day breaketh. Jacob but held him faster. He had found out the other wrestler ; danger gave him boldness ; faith gave him confidence ; and, clinging to God with the grasp of a drowning man, he replied, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And when he had prevailed, and got the blessing, "Jacob called the name of the place Peniel ; for I have *seen God* face to face, and my life is preserved."

Again, Joshua and the host are lying before Jericho, about to commence the siege. To enjoy an hour of quiet devotion, undisturbed by the din and distraction of the camp, or, perhaps, like a wary general, under cover of the night, to reconnoitre the position of the enemy, and find where he might attack their defences with most success, Joshua goes forth alone. And as, advancing with bold yet cautious steps, he turns some corner of the road, some angle of the wall, he starts, finding himself face to face with an armed man. His bravery is not ruffled. He thinks not of retreat ; but drawing, advancing, and, perhaps, pointing his sword to the breast of the unknown, he challenges with the question, Art thou for us or for our adversaries ? He was promptly answered. Nor could the sword of the other, gleaming in the moonbeam and descending to cleave his helmet and fell him to the ground, have brought Joshua more suddenly to his knees than that answer. Nay; was the reply, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. Captain of the host of the Lord! No man; no, nor angel, this! God himself commands in the battle. The order, first issued from amidst the flames of the burning bush, and now repeated, Put thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground, reveals God's own presence. Joshua worships; and rises—with what heart, and hopes, and holy confidence! And yet not higher than believers may venture to cherish in their daily fight with the devil, the world, and the flesh. The Captain of your salvation mingles in that conflict; he is on your side; and, as Joshua might have said on his return to the host, you can say, Our God shall fight for us.

Again, as God assumed a visible form to foretell the fall of Jericho, he did the same to foretell the rise of Samson—suiting his appearance, as he still does his grace, to the varied circumstances of his people. He, who met Joshua as a mailed warrior, presents himself to Manoah's wife under a peaceful aspect; yet mingling strangely—as they were united in our Lord—the characters of the human and divine, his form belonged to earth, but his face shone with a heavenly glory. A man of God came unto me, she said to her husband, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible. His tidings were strange enough to rouse a woman's curiosity, yet awe struck her dumb, nor left her a word to say or a question to ask; "I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name." Some days thereafter she sits alone in the field; and, as she is ruminating, perhaps, on an event that had deeply impressed her mind, suddenly the same form appears. She hastens homeward; tells her husband; returns with him; and Manoah, less timid than the woman, solves the mystery by bluntly asking, What is thy name? Why askest thou thus after my name, was the significant reply, seeing it is secret? That answer revealed at once, to his great surprise and awe, that he stood in the august presence of God; nor could any doubt of that remain, when this Being of incommunicable name, calling fire from the rock to consume their sacrifice, leaped upon the altar, and ascended to heaven in its flames. The first to recover speech, so soon as his tongue was unbound, Manoah turns to his wife, and, pale with terror, exclaims—"We shall surely die, because we have *seen* God."

From many cases of the same character, let me select another, where, as I have seen, a dull leaden cloud suddenly changed by a flood of sunbeams into living gold, the divine glory shines with such bright effulgence, that the scene wears an aspect of heaven more than of earth. Within the holy temple Isaiah beholds one sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. His train fills the house. Not white-robed priests, but shining seraphim are his attendants. Incense that never dropped from earthly trees, but such as you might fancy that angel hands gathered from the trees that dip their branches in the river of life, diffuses celestial odors; voices, such as they hear in heaven, and shepherds heard in the skies of Bethlehem, fill the courts with praise, singing, in anticipation of gospel days, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Nature herself acknowledges the presence of God—the earth trembles, the door-posts shake, the fire of the altar burns dim through a cloud of smoke, and Isaiah, overpowered by the awful glory of the scene, falls prostrate to the ground, crying—Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips: and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have *seen the king, the Lord of hosts.* By such visible manifestations of himself, a gracious God, from time to time, thus comforted and encouraged his people in the days of old.

But on turning to another page of the Bible, what do we find? We find it averred that "no man hath seen God at any time." How are we to reconcile that positive statement with these plain facts? There is but one way of doing so—namely, by regarding those appearances as manifestations of him "who is the image of the invisible God." That it was Christ who appeared to Abraham, Christ who wrestled with Jacob, Christ who led Israel out of Egypt, and, by the hands of Moses and Aaron, conducted the people to the promised land; that it was he, who, before he came in the flesh, appeared in these early ages of the church as her guardian and her God, is a conclusion which Scripture warrants. Paul distinctly charges the host in the desert with having tempted Christ. Neither, says he, let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

This idea is in perfect harmony with other passages in the history of redemption. We know for certain that the fruit of our Lord's incarnation was anticipated. The benefits of his death were enjoyed before he died; the legacies of the will were paid before the demise of the testator; for the saints, who lived in the days that preceded his advent, were received to glory, if I may so speak, upon his bond, his promise to pay. And if the fruit of his incarnation was thus anticipated, why not the fact of it? Viewed in this light, how do these Old Testament stories acquire a deeper and more enduring interest to us? In the guide of Abraham's pilgrimage I see the guide of my own. Jacob's success in wrestling imparts vigor to my prayers. To think that the same arm which rolled back the gates of the sea, and stopped the wheels of the sun, for us hung in feeble infancy around a mother's neck; that the same voice which spake in Sinai's rolling thunders, for us wailed feebly on Mary's bosom, and cried on the cross, I thirst; that the same august being who delivered the law amid the majesty of heaven, for us died to fulfil it amid the deepest ignominies of earth; that he before whom Moses did exceedingly fear and quake, and Joshua fell, and the holy prophet fainted, was that very same Jesus whose gentle manners won the confidence of childhood, and whose kind eye beamed forgiveness on a poor, frail, fallen woman, as she stooped to wash his feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head, these things should exalt Jesus higher in our esteem, and endear him more and more to our hearts. What a combination of grandest majesty, and most gentle mercy shines in this visible "Image of the invisible God!" Surely he is worthy of your acceptance, and reverence, and love!

In turning your attention now to the person and work of him who is "the image of the invisible God," let me introduce the subject by remarking,

III. That the greatness of the worker corresponds to the greatness of the work.

It is not always so in the providence of Him who saves by many or by few. Sometimes God accomplishes the mightiest ends by the feeblest instruments. He hath made the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and out of the mouth of babes and sucklings ordained strength.

For example, many of the lovely islands of the Pacific are formed entirely of coral, while others are protected from the violence of the waves by a circular rampart of the same material. Founded in the depths of ocean, this coral wall rises to the surface, where it indicates its presence by a long white line of breakers. The giant rollers that come in from the sea, and threaten with their foaming crests to sweep that island from its base, spend their strength and dash their waters into snowy foam against this protection wall. And thus, as within a charmed circle, while all without is a tumbling ocean, the narrow strip of water that lies between this bulwark and the shore is calm as peace, reflecting, as a liquid mirror, the boats that sleep upon its surface, and the stately palms that fringe the beach. These stupendous breakwaters, that so greatly surpass in stability and strength any which our art and science have erected, are the work of what? That God who employed the hornet to drive the Amorite out of Canaan, has constructed them by means as insignificant. They are the masonry of an insect—an insect so small that the human eye can hardly detect it, and so feeble that an infant's finger could crush it. They are built by the coral worm, and I have been told by those who have seen these emerald isles, set within their silver border, like gems on the ocean's bosom, that the contrast is most surprising between the greatness of the work and the littleness of the worker.

Turning from the Book of Nature, let me now take an illustration from the Book of Revelation. Look upon this picture of desolation wrought on the land of Israel : " A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains ; a great people and a strong ; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth. The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness ; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses, and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained ; all faces shall gather blackness. The earth shall quake before them, the heavens shall tremble, the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining : and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army : for his camp is very great."

In answer to the cry of innocent blood, and to crush a horrible rebellion, we covered the sea with sails, and, summoning our soldiers from distant colonies, with great preparations and after gigantic efforts, we poured them from crowded ships on the shores of a revolted land. But whence did God bring that mighty army described by the prophet in such vivid colors ? Came they from heaven? Were its portals flung open, that troops of embattled angels might rush forth to avenge his cause? Or did he summon the Assyrian, the Egyptian, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman, to pour their armed hosts on a doomed, devoted, guilty land? No. The earth quaked, but not beneath the tread of armies. The sun, moon, and stars were darkened, but not by a cloud of angel wings. God summoned only the locust from its native marshes, and bade the brood of worms carry desolation into the land. It was summer yesterday. The fields waved with corn, the orchards were white with almond blossoms, the clustering vines, embraced the hills, and the forests were clad in a broad mantle of living green. The locust comes, and it is winter. The flowers are gone, and fields are bare, and leafless trees, as if imploring pity, lift their naked arms to heaven; and, bearing on it the wail of famine, the wind, that yesterday breathed perfumes, and danced in joy over the corn, and played and sung among the leaves, now sweeps in howling blast over utter devastation. The locust has executed its commission. It has done God's work, and in that work of divine judgment, we see again a remarkable contrast between the greatness of the action and the littleness of the agent.

In his providence and the government of his people, how often has God produced great effects by most inadequate means? He seems to do it for the very purpose of showing that, whatever be the instrument, the work, of goodness or of judgment, is his own. He is a jealous God, and will not give his glory unto another. In Moses, for example, we see one sprung of the enslaved race. Nor does he crouch before their tyrant with awe in his look, and in his hand a humble petition; but stands erect in Pharaoh's hall, and, stamping his foot, demands that his brethren be free. In David we see a beardless lad, attired in a shepherd's peaceful garb, who carries some rustic provision to his brothers in the camp, and gazes around him with the keen curiosity of a peasant on all the circumstance, and pomp, and pride of war. Next day, where is he? What a change! Amid beating hearts, a breathless suspense, eyes dim with anxiety, that gentle boy, his mother's love, his old father's care, is doing brave battle with a giant in the presence of two great armies, and plucking the laurels from Goliah's brow.

Not, perhaps, in outward aspect, but in fact and truth, how marked the contrast between these scenes and that which salvation presents! Redemption is a great work, a most glorious work; one, amid God's other works and through all past ages, without a parallel. Do not despise it, or reject it, no, nor neglect it; for how shall you escape if you neglect this great salvation? It is of all God's works the greatest; it is his "strange" work. That cross on Calvary, which mercy raised for you, cost more love, and labor, and wisdom, and skill, than all yon starry universe. With the earth its emerald floor, its roof the sapphire firmament, the sun and stars its pendent lamps, its incense a thousand fragrant odors, its music of many sounds and instruments the song of groves, the murmur of the streams, the voices of winged winds, the pealing thunder, and the everlasting roar of ocean, Nature's is a glorious temple! Yet that is a nobler temple, which, with blood-redeemed saints for its living stones, and God and the Lamb for its uncreated lights, stands aloft on the Rock of Ages—the admiration of angels and the glory of the universe. Earth wears on her bosom no blossoms so white, and pure, and sweet of fragrance, as the flowers of a garland on a Saviour's brow! Is Magdalene, is Manasseh, is Saul, are a thousand and a thousand others in glory yonder, a wonder to angels, and an astonishment to themselves? But great as is the work begun on earth and consummated in heaven, how much greater is the worker? Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? He comes; hell flies his presence. He appears; all the angels of God worship him. He speaks; the tempestuous sea is calm. He commands; the grave gives up its dead. He stands on this sin-smitten world, "in praises, doing wonders;" the visible image of an invisible God. Angels celebrate his advent and attend his departure—hovering alike over the manger of Bethlehem and the crest of Olivet; and when he has left the grave to ascend the throne, hark to the cry at the gate of heaven, Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Within, they ask, Who is this King of Glory? The gate rolls open, and, greeted with shout and song, the procession enters, as his escort answer, The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory. With such honors and gladness may he be received into our hearts! Holy Spirit, throw open their gates! Jesus ascend their throne! that, holding Thee whom heaven holds, we may have a heaven within us; and, washed in thy blood and renewed by thy Spirit, may present in ourselves—what sin has forfeited but grace restores—a visible image of the invisible God.

The Image of God.

(CONTINUED.)

Who is the image of the invisible God.—COLOSSIANS i. 15.

DESCRIBING a tribe of pagan Africans, Dr. Livingstone says, Like most others, they listen with respect and attention, but when we kneel down and worship an unseen Being, the act and position appear to them so ridiculous, that they cannot refrain from bursting into uncontrollable laughter. Accustomed from our earliest childhood to worship the unseen, we wonder at these merry savages; and yet, by nature like them, we are all creatures of sight and sense. Hence our desire to see any remarkable person; hence the pleasure we take in the portrait that embellishes the biography of a great or good man, or in the statue which preserves his features and adorns his tomb. Some may call the publican's a childish curiosity. But we sympathise with Zaccheus, when, having heard that Jesus was passing, he left the receipt of custom to join the throng; but, lost there, shot a-head of the multitude, and climbed a friendly sycamore, to catch a passing glance at the wonder-working man. We esteem it not the least of the blessings which shall be enjoyed in heaven, that we shall see Jesus there; see him as he is; gaze with fond, adoring love on the very face and form which our faith has so often tried to fancy, and painters of the greatest genius have utterly failed to express.

A sense of guilt makes man afraid of God. Conscience makes cowards of us all; so that, as Adam fled from his presence to the bushes of the garden, many fly even from the thought of him, in whom, but for sin, they would have lovingly confided. But for the fears of guilt, the contemplation of God's works would kindle a devout curiosity to see the hand they sprung from. And when, so rapt in admiration as for the time to forget that we are sinners, we gaze on the spangled firmament, or look out on the blue rolling ocean, or, from the peak of some lofty mountain, look over a tumbling sea of hills, or down on the glorious landscape, as in the mingled beauty of dark greenwood, and golden fields, and silver streams, and castle-crowned summits, and scattered villages, and busy towns, it stretches away to the distant shore, the soul has some longing for a view of God more palpable than it gets. We almost wish that he were not invisible, and enter, in some measure, into the feelings of Moses on Mount Sinai. The everlasting thunderings were grand, vividly the lightning flashed and flickered, awfully sublime were the dark cloud and voices of the mount, but they were not God. The heart craved for some view of himself. And so, highest example of perfect love casting out fear, with the lightnings playing around him, and the earth shaking beneath his feet, bold man! he bowed his head and bent his knee, and said, Show me thy glory.

Being, as we have already shown, so much creatures of sight and sense, this incident leads me to remark—

I. That God, as revealed visibly in Jesus Christ, meets and satisfies one of our strongest wants.

Our Lord's divinity, which is to some like his death, to the Jew "a stumbling-block," like his resurrection to the Greek, foolishness, does not stagger my faith in the Bible. On the contrary, Christ's divine nature strengthens my belief in its divine authority; and, in the light of that doctrine, the sacred volume appears all the more plainly to be both the power of God and the wisdom of God. That doctrine, as I hope to show you, goes to establish, not shake its claims to be devoutly received as a revelation from heaven.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow thyself down to them, nor serve them." So runs the second commandment; and, if I am to judge from the universal practice of mankind, there is not one of the ten commandments which runs more counter to our nature. That remark may surprise you. But in proof of it—

1. Look at the heathen world.

For long dark ages the whole earth was given up to idolatry, with the exception of a single nation. The Hebrews stood alone. They worshipped in a temple without an idol, and rejected the use of images in the services of religion. Go back to remotest time. Start from the age either of those old Assyrians, whose gods we have been digging from the ruins of Nineveh, or of those older Egyptians whose mummy forms, with their dog and hawk-headed divinities, lie entombed on the banks of the Nile; and, coming down the course of time to the last-discovered tribe of savages, we find that all nations, with scarcely an exception, have been idolaters. All have clung to the visible, and employed sensible representations of the divinity; theirs a sensuous worship, whether they adored one or ten thousand gods. Nor is this wonderful. To fix the mind and affections on an invisible Being seemed like attempting to anchor a vessel on a flowing tide or rolling billows. These offer nothing to hold by. And, as a climbing plant, for lack of a better stay, will throw its arms around a ruined wall or rotten tree, rather than want something palpable to which their thoughts might cling, men have worshipped the Divine Being through images of the basest character and most hideous forms. We gaze with blank astonishment on the gods of many heathen races. We ask, is it possible that rational beings have bent the knee to this painted stick, that, with a bunch of feathers stuck on its head, and two bits of inlaid pearl-shell for eyes, presents but the rudest resemblance to the form of humanity? Not only possible but certain. Talk of "the dignity of our nature!" How that ugly idol, with man supplicating its help and trembling before its wrath, refutes the notion, and proclaims the fall! Contrast Adam, erect in his innocence, and lifting up an open countenance to the heavens, with that dark, crouching, miserable savage, who kneels to this stick. What a fall is there! How is the gold become dim? how is the most fine gold changed? Then,

2. Look at the evidence of this proneness to sensuous worship as it appears in the history of the Jews. Even among God's chosen people, how did this propensity to idolatry constantly manifest itself, just as I have seen broom, and furze, and heath, and such other wild plants as were natural to the soil, spring up in cultivated pastures—ready to resume possession, should the husbandman relax his efforts to keep them down

and root them out? There could be no greater folly on the part of the Israelites than to venerate the gods of Egypt. If the gods whose aid the Egyptians invoked had been else than "vanity," the Hebrews had still been slaves; and yet so prone were they to idolatry, that they set up a golden calf at the very foot of Sinai. Again, the grass was hardly green on David's grave, when his son, forfeiting his title of the wisest of men, allowed himself to be seduced by heathen women to lend his countenance to heathen idolatry; the abomination of Moab stood in front of the temple, and Ashtaroth, enthroned on Olivet, looked down with haughty contempt on the courts of Zion. Again, when the kingdom was broken up through the insane folly of Rehoboam, see how the ten tribes, like a bark parted from her anchors, and borne by a strong tide on a fatal reef, drifted on idolatry. A few years suffice to engulf the whole nation into the deepest, grossest, paganism. Ere one half century has passed, Elijah stands alone; faithful among the faithless; he only by any public act protesting against the universal idolatry; he cries, I, even I only, am left. Thus rapidly, when abandoned by God to the power of their passions, do both men and nations sink. As the history of many still proves, nothing is so easy as the descent into hell. Then,

3. We find evidence of this propensity to idolatry even in the Christian church. We have not to rake up the ashes of Jewish history, nor disturb the graves of ancient Nimrods and Pharaohs, nor import their rude idols from Polynesian shores, to prove the deep longing that there is in our nature for a God whom our senses may embrace. How deeply has Christianity herself

suffered from this cause? Look to the church of Rome! Her temples are crowded with images. Fancy some old Roman, rising from his grave on the banks of the Tiber. Looking on the sensuous worship of modern Rome, the honors paid to a doll decked out to represent Christ's mother—multitudes prostrate at the feet of stone apostles—the incense and prayers offered to the lifeless effigy of a man, here hanging in weakness on a cross, or there sitting in triumph on the globe where he sways a sceptre, and treads a serpent beneath his feet, what could he suppose but that the "eternal city" had changed her idols—nor ceased from her idolatry; and, by some strange turn of fortune, had given to one Jesus the old throne of Jupiter, and assigned the crown which Juno wore in his days to another queen of heaven? In that bestial form at the foot of Sinai, with the shameless, naked, frantic crowd singing and dancing and shouting around it, the scene which filled Moses with great indignation, strikes us with great astonishment. How, we ask, with God thundering above their heads, could they fall into such gross idolatry? And yet have we not stood astonished to see a rational creature bending head and knee to a tinselled image, amid circumstances, too, which made the act appear peculiarly surprising and degrading? There, the worship of a creature insulted the glory of God's grandest works; nor did Popery ever seem to us more hateful, more dishonoring, and more debasing, than amid scenes whose magnificence raised the soul to God, as on eagles' wings. There, a blind leader of the blind, she was turning away the faith, and love, and worship of his creatures from him whose voice was heard in the roar of the Alpine cataract, whose mighty hand was seen in mountains that stood piled to heaven, crowned with their eternal snows, and of whose great white throne of judgment one fancied they saw a solemn image in that pure, lofty, majestic, snowy dome, which glistened in sunbeams, high over mountains and valleys already wrapped in evening gloom.

Now, in what way are we to account for this universal tendency to idolatry. It is not enough to call it folly. I ask, what led to such folly, and led all men to it?—philosophers with fools, the wisest with the weakest, of the heathen? It admits of but one explanation—the feeling from which idolatry springs are deeply rooted in our nature.

You tell me that God is invisible, infinite, incomprehensible. You teach me that neither in wood, nor stone, nor colors, nor even in my mind's fancy, may I impart to him form or figure; neither features to express his emotions, nor hands to do his work: neither eyes, although they beam, nor a heart, although it beat with love; and you warn me, moreover, that, even in imagination, to clothe the Divine Being in a form the most venerable and august, is to be guilty of a species of idolatry. But it seems as difficult for me to make such a being the object of my affections, as to grasp a sound, or to detain a shadow. This heart craves something more congenial to my nature, and seeks in God a palpable object for its affections to cling to. That is our want. And now see how that want is met by the gospel, and is provided for by him who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust."

Nothing appears to me more remarkable in providence, or more clearly to attest the being and attributes of an all-presiding God, than the perfect adaptation of creatures to the circumstances in which they are placed. See how the summer, that brings back the swallows to our door, in myriads of insects produces their food; how those creatures that burrow in the soil have bodies shaped like a wedge, and fore-feet so formed as to do the work of a spade; how the animals that inhabit arctic climes are wrapped in furs. which man, for the sake of their warmth, is glad to borrow, and to which God, for the protection of their lives, has given the color of snow; how, furnished with hollow bones and downy feathers, birds are adapted to float in an atmosphere of thin transparent air; and how other creatures, slow of motion, and unarmed for battle, and thus helplessly exposed to their enemies, carry a strong castle on their backs—retiring within their shell, as men into a fortalice, safe from all attack. The student of nature thus recognizes, with adoring wonder, the harmony which God has established between his creatures and their circumstances. Now the divinity of our faith is not less conspicuous to the believer's eye, in respect of its perfect adaptation to the peculiarities, or, if you will call them so, to the infirmities of our nature. In his incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, God presents himself to me in a form which meets my wants. The Infinite is brought within the limits of my narrow understanding; the Invisible is revealed to my sight; I can touch him, hear him, see him, speak to him. In the hand which he holds out to save me, I have what my own can grasp. In that eye bent on me, whether bedewed with tears, or beaming with affection, I see divine love in a form I feel, and can understand. God addresses me in human tones; God stands before me in the fashion of a man; and, paradox as it appears, when I fall at his feet to say with Thomas, My Lord and my God, I am an image-worshipper, yet no idolater; for the Being before whom I bend is not a mere man, nor a graven image, nor a dead thing, but the living, loving, eternal, "express image" of the "invisible God."

II. Consider in what sense Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God."

This term, image, is to be taken here in its widest, most comprehensive sense. It means much more than a mere resemblance; it conveys the idea of shadow less than that of substance; and is to be understood in the sense in which Paul employs it, when he says of the Mosaic institutions—"The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the *very image*," or *substance*, "of the things." An image may be moulded in clay, or cut in marble, or struck in metal, or so formed on the watery mirror, that, when blustering winds were hushed, and no ripple disturbed the lake, we have lain over our boat to see the starry firmament imaged in its crystal depths, and wish it were thus in our bosom—a heaven above repeated in a heaven below. Then there are living as well as dead images. And as a Christian's life, without any occasion for his lips telling it, should proclaim him to the world a child of God, so I have known an infant bear such striking resemblance to his father, that what his tongue could not tell, his face did; and people, struck by the likeness, remarked of the nursling, He is the very image of his father. Such was Adam in his state of innocence. Endowing him with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, God made good his words, Let us make man in our own image.

Now it may be said that, as our Lord, like the first Adam, was a pure and holy creature, "harmless," and "undefiled," he is therefore called the image of God.

Yet that does not exhaust the meaning of this term; nor is it at all on that account that Paul speaks of him as "the second Adam," but because, as their representative and federal head, Jesus stood to his people in the same covenant relationship as our first parent did to all his posterity.

Nor have they sounded the depths, seen to the bottom of this expression, who say that, since our Lord was endowed with power to do the works of God, to work many mighty miracles, he might therefore be called the image of God. For many others, both before and after him, were in that sense equally images of God. How godlike was Moses, when he raised his arm to heaven, and thunders rent the answering skies; when, giving origin perhaps to the heathen legend of Neptune and his trident, he waved his rod upon the deep, and, billow rolling back from billow, the sea was parted by his power! What a godlike action Joshua's on that battlefield, when he met, and where he conquered five kings in fight! God fought for him with hailstones, and he fought for God with swords; and no more than devils of hell could stand before us, did prayer always summon heaven to our aid, could mortal men stand before such onslaught—"Kings of armies did flee apace;" that day five crowns were lost. But, apparently a most inopportune event, ere Joshua has reaped the fruits of his victory, the sun, emerging from the dark hail-cloud, has sunk low in the sky. His burning wheels touch the crest of Gibeon, while the pale moon, marshaling on the night to protect the flying enemy, is showing her face over the valley of Ajalon. Joshua sees, that, as has happened to other conquerors, darkness will rob him of the prize; nor leave anything more substantial in his hand than a wreath of laurel, the honors of the day. Inspired for the occasion, he lifts his bloody sword to the heavens, he commands their luminaries to stop; and when, like high-mettled coursers which, knowing their masters' hand, instantly obey the rein, the sun and moon stand still, hang motionless in the portentous sky, how grandly does he stand there, a visible image of God? Yet, where is Joshua, or Moses, or Elijah, or Paul, or Peter, or any of all the servants by whom Jehovah wrought such wonders in the days of old, called an "image of the invisible God?" Where are these men set forth as mysteries? Where are they represented as "God manifest in the flesh?" Of which of them did God himself say, Let all the angels of God worship him? A blind superstition may worship them; but yonder, where Moses bends the knee by the side of Mary Magdalene, and Joshua bows low as Rahab, and Paul sings of the mercy that saved in himself the chief of sinners, they worship Jesus, as in his double nature both God and man; a visible manifestation of the invisible; "the only begotten of the Father; distinguished from all other images, whether impressed on holy angels or on sainted men, as "the *express* image of his person." Herein lies the amazing breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of God; for you he gave that image to be broken—shattered by the hand of death. Blessed be his name, He died, the just for the unjust, that we might be saved.

III. Let me direct your attention to some illustrations of this truth.

"Shew us the Father," said Philip to our Lord. Had he said, Cleave me that mountain, divide this sea stop the sun, lay thy finger on the hands of time, he had asked nothing impossible; nothing more difficult for Jesus than saying to a cripple, Walk, or to the dead, Come forth. Yet impossible as was that for which Philip asked, since "no man hath seen God at any time, nor can see him," and strangely bold as was his request, it was followed by a happy issue. What clear testimony does our Lord's reply bear both to his own divinity and to his father's loving, pitiful, tender nature! "He that hath seen me, Philip," seen me weeping with the living and weeping for the dead, seen me receiving little children into my arms to bless them, seen me inviting the weary to rest, pitying all human suffering, patient under the greatest wrongs, encouraging the penitent, and ready to forgive the vilest sinners. "he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." In me, my character and works, you have a living, visible, perfect "image of the invisible God."

In selecting some of the divine attributes to illustrate this, I remark—

1. In our Lord Jesus Christ we see the power of God.

An Arab, a wild son of the desert, one more accustomed to fight than to reason, to plunder a caravan than to argue a cause, was asked by a traveler how he knew that there was a God. He fixed his dark eyes with a stare of savage wonder on the man who seemed to doubt the being of God; and then, as he was wont, when he encountered a foe, to answer spear with spear, he met that question with another, How do I know whether it was a man or a camel that passed my tent last night? Well spoken, child of the desert! for not more plainly do the footprints on the sand reveal to thy eye whether it was a man or camel that passed thy tent in the darkness of the night, than God's works reveal his being and power. They testify of him. His power has left its footprint impressed upon them all.

Now, whose footprint is that on the ground there before the tomb of Lazarus? Was it God or man that passed that way, leaving strange evidence of his presence in an empty grave? There, the revolution of time has brought round again the days of Eden; for, unless it be easier to give life to the dust of the grave than to the dust of the ground, the spectators of that stupendous miracle, who stand transfixed with astonishment, gazing on the dead alive, have seen the arm of God made bare; and, from the very lips that cried, Lazarus, come forth, have they heard the voice which said of old, Let us make man in our image. Nay, a day of older date than Eden's has returned. To make something out of nothing is a work more visibly stamped with divinity than to make one thing out of another—a living man out of lifeless dust; and ere our Lord left the world, he was to leave behind him, in an act, not of forming but of creating power, the most visible footprint and impress of the great Creator. The scene of it may be less picturesque, less striking to common eyes, than when Jesus rose in the boat to rebuke the storm; than when leaving Galilee's shore to cross the lake, the waters sustained him, and he walked like a shadowy spirit, upon the heaving billows; than when he stayed a funeral procession at the gate of Nain, and, going up to the bier, laid his hand on the corpse of the widow's son, and, changing death to life, left him folding her in his fond embraces; yet our Lord never appeared more the express image of his Father, than on yonder green grassy mountain side. The calmness of all the scene, the meanness of the company, if you will have it so, the poverty of the fare, amid these accessories, that are but dull foils to the sparkling gem, Jesus stands forth in the glory of a Creator. At his will, the bread multiplies; it grows in the hands of disciples; five thousand men are filled to repletion with what had not otherwise satisfied five; and, thing unheard of before, the fragments of narrow circumstances and a scanty table far exceeded the original provision. The materials of the feast filled one basket, but the fragments fill twelve. Who does not see the day of creation restored in that banquet? In the author of this, the greatest of all his miracles, who does not see "the express image" of him who made things that are out of things that were not, said of matter's first-born and purest element, Let there be light: and there was light?

2. In Christ we see the image of a holy God. Many years ago a horrible crime was committed in a neighboring country. It was determined that the guilty man, whoever he might be, so soon as he was discovered and convicted, should die. He had fled; but the eye of justice tracked him to his hiding-place. Dragged from it, he is arraigned at the bar; and fancy, if you can, the feelings of his judge, when, in the pale, trembling, miserable, guilty wretch, he recognized his own son—his only son! What an agonizing struggle now began in that father's bosom! He is torn between the conflicting claims of nature and duty. The public indignation against the criminal is lost in pity for the father, as he sits there transfixed with horror, overwhelmed with grief, while his child, with clasped hands and eyes that swim in tears, implores a father's pity.

Duty bears nature down. He pronounces sentence of death; but in passing it on his son, he passes it on himself. Nature would have her own. He rises; he leaves the bench; he hastens home; he lies down on his bed; nor ever rising from it, dies of a broken heart.

God cannot die; yet, when, rather than his holy law should be broken with impunity, he gave up his love to bleed, his beloved son to die, a substitute for us, oh, how did the blood which dyed that cross dye his law in colors of the brightest holiness! What sermon like that on the text, "It is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Nor, as in that dying Saviour hung high under a frowning heaven, as beneath that bloody tree, where Mary receives into her arms the dead body of her son, and weeping women in bitter anguish kiss his wounded feet, is there in hell or heaven a scene so impressively, awfully illustrative of the angel's anthem, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

3. In Christ we see the image of a God willing and and able to save.

Let me take an illustration of this from an act of salvation which he performed under circumstances of the greatest difficulty and disadvantage. The scene is laid at the cross. Jesus is dying; agonising pains, the shouts of the pitiless multitude, their insulting mockery, and the deep darkness of the hour, combine to disturb his mind. If he can save then and there, save when his hand is nailed to the tree, what may he not do, now that he is exalted to the right hand of God, with all power given him in earth and heaven?

I would awaken hope in the bosom of despair, I would like to cheer God's people, and I would try to encourage the greatest sinners to turn with faith to this refuge of the lost; let us therefore draw near, and see how his divine ability to save, streaming like a sunbeam through a riven cloud, revealed him, even when hanging on the cross, as the adorable image of an invisible God. And may the Holy Spirit bless the sight to you!

It is easy to save one who has fallen into the flood some distance above the cataract, where the river, not yet hurrying to the fall, flows placidly on its way. But further down the difficulty becomes great, every foot further down the greater; for the current moves with faster speed and growing force, till at length it shoots forward with arrowy flight, and, reaching the brink, leaps headlong into a boiling gulf. Now, away among the mountains, I know such a place, where once three shepherds, brothers, were to leap, as they had often done, from rock to rock, across the narrow chasm through which the swollen waters rushed onward to their fall. Bold mountaineers, and looking with careless eye on a sight which had turned others dizzy, one bounded over like a red deer; another followed—but, alas, his foot slipping on the smoothly treacherous ledge, he staggered, reeled, and falling back, rolled over with a sullen plunge into the jaws of the abyss. Quick as lightning, his brother sprang forward—down to a point where the waters issue into a more open space, just above the crag over which they throw themselves into the black, rock-girdled, boiling cavern. There, standing on the verge of death, he eyes the body coming; he bends—his arm is out—thank God, he has him in his powerful grasp. Bravely, brotherly done! Alas! it is done in vain. The third brother, sad spectator of the scene, saw him swept from his slippery footing: and, in their death not divided, as of old they had lain in their childhood, locked in each other's arms they went over, horribly whelmed in the depths of the swirling pool. Not so perished our elder Brother, and the thief he stretched out his hand to save. He plucked him from the brink of hell; he saved him on the dizzy edge of the dreadful pit. Poor wretch, ah! he hangs above the gulf; he is half over; just then he turns a dying eye on a dying Saviour, and utters but one cry for help. The arm of mercy seizes him; he is saved; now heaven holds him crowned in glory! What a revelation of Jesus as the express image of him who has power to save at the very uttermost! What an encouragement to you, though the chief of sinners, to cast yourselves at Jesus' feet! Do it. Do it now. May heaven help you to do it now! Another moment, and you may be beyond the reach of mercy. Another moment may be a whole eternity too late.

The First-Born.

The first-born of every creature.—COLOSSIANS i. 15.

THOUSANDS each night—the watchman on his beat, the sentinel on the ramparts, the seaman on the heaving deep, the jaded votaries of pleasure on their return from ball and revel—walk beneath the spangled heavens, nor once raise their eyes, or, if they do, raise not their thoughts to the magnificence of the scene. And each day, thousands engrossed with the pursuit of pleasure or business, tread the spangled sward with an eye of no more intelligence than an ox—careless of the beautiful flowers, which with a happier, purer taste, the little child loves to gather, and, singing to her work, weaves into garlands for her sunny brow. Not that these persons are constitutionally dead to beauty, or devoid of intelligence. Not that they look on the face of nature with an idiot's vacant stare, but familiarity, which breeds contempt in some instances, in this has bred indifference. Behold, perhaps one reason why, though our Lord presented such a glorious combination of divine and human excellencies, many were insensible to it; and why, sad to think of it, he found so much occasion to apply to himself the old proverb, A prophet is not without honor but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house!

A less pardonable reason, however, may be found for this in his case, as in others, and found in that envy to which our fallen nature is prone. A bad, a base, in every way an unprofitable passion, one that, more than any other, carries its own punishment with it, and makes those who cherish it wretched, envy is its own avenger; and yet, so prone are many to regard others with envy, that a man may feel assured that he has begun to rise in the world so soon as he hears the buzz of detractors, and feels their poisoned stings. This, indeed, is not a bad test of merit, just as we know that to be the finest and the ripest fruit which bears the marks of having been attacked by wasp, or hornet, or other such winged or wingless insects. The goose, and the sea-gull, and other common creatures, are left to pursue their way through the fields of air without interruption or attack, but I have seen, when some noble bird appeared, who had a wing to soar aloft, to cleave the clouds, how he was harassed and hunted by a noisy crowd, that assailed him with their voices, but, mingling cunning with insolence, kept beyond the swoop of his pinions, or the stroke of his talons. Now, see how Moses, the meekest, noblest, most generous of men was envied by ambitious spirits among the children of Israel! Ye take too much upon you, they said to him and his brother, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore, then, lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? Ay, and even his own brother and sister grew jealous of him. On pretence of his having done wrong in marrying an Ethiopian woman, they who should have supported the brother to whom they owed their position, most basely and ungratefully attempted to undermine his influence. It was very wrong in Moses to make this marriage—to enter into such an unsuitable alliance; so they said to the multitude. Yet mere dust and smoke *that*, which they raised to cover their real motives and base ends. The envy, from whose evil eye no excellence is a protecting charm, and which, rending asunder the most sacred ties, refuses to spare a brother, was at the bottom of the discontent. For while Aaron and Miriam held such language to the people, masking their selfish passions under a fair pretence of patriotism and piety, listen to them in their tent, how different their language to each other, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?

Looking at such cases, what else was to be expected from the men of Nazareth, a place of proverbially bad repute, than that they should grudge Jesus his honors, and hate him for his success? He had emerged from deep obscurity into a fame that filled every mouth with his works, and embraced within its widening circle all the land. He had become famous; and they had not. It did not matter that that was not his fault. They felt themselves grow less as he grew greater, and they could not brook that; such as were stars among them, or wished to be thought so, were bitterly mortified to find themselves extinguished in the light of this rising sun. Therefore they hated Christ, giving him ground to complain, A prophet is not without honor but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

Let me turn your attention to one occasion when this feeling, which had been grumbling like a pent-up volcano, burst forth most insolently, most offensively. Our Lord was teaching in the synagogue of Nazareth —teaching with that strange, wonderful, divine wisdom, which in its very dawn, when the child was but twelve years old, astonished the gray divines and subtlest lawyers of the temple; and which not only made unprejudiced hearers hang on his gracious lips, but compelled his enemies to confess, Never man spake like this man. On the occasion to which I refer, envy gnawed like a canker-worm, at the heart of his townsmen. What business had he to reach an eminence they might aspire to, but could never attain? Hopeless of that, although they could not rise to his height, they might perchance pull him down to their own level. They will try. And so, at the close of his discourse, when we might have expected them to praise God for the wisdom that had dropped from his lips, and to congratulate Mary on her son, and their native town on an inhabitant whose name would render Nazareth famous to the latest ages, they cast about for something which, by detracting from his glory, might gratify their spleen. They had nothing to say against either the matter or the manner of the discourse; both were perfect. Nor had they a whisper to breathe against the life and character of the speaker. A circumstance worthy of note! For it is one of the finest testimonies borne to our Lord's lofty and holy life, that the thirty years which he spent in a small town—where leisure always abounds, and scandal is often rife, and every man's character and habits are discussed in private circles, and dissected by many cutting tongues—did not furnish them with the shred of an excuse for whispering an ill word against him. His life resembled a polished mirror, which the foulest breath cannot stain, nor dim beyond a passing moment. What a noble testimony to Jesus Christ! Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, envy found no way to vent its malice and spit its venom at him, but by a taunt she drew from his humble origin and poor relatives. As if it were not an honor to rise above the circumstances of our birth, as if a man's ascent by one step above his original condition, fairly, honestly, and honorably won, were not more a matter of just pride, than a descent traced from the proudest ancestry, they said, Is not this the *carpenter*, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?—whence, then, hath this man all these things?

Extending from his early youth into the years of mature manhood, there is a great blank in our Lord's history. Eighteen years of his life stand unaccounted for; and that blank, looking as dark as the starless regions of the sky, tradition, usually so fertile in invention, has not attempted to fill up. How often have I wondered and tried to fancy what Jesus did, and how he passed the time between his boyhood, when he vanishes from our sight, and his thirtieth year, when he again appears upon the stage to enter on his public ministry? Thanks to his townsmen's envious sneer, or, rather, thanks to Him who permitted the insult, and thus has made the wrath of man to praise him, their insolent taunt throws a ray of light into the deep obscurity. Their question, Is not this the carpenter? not, as at another time, the carpenter's son, but the *carpenter* himself, suggests to us the picture of a humble home in Nazareth, known to the neighborhood as the carpenter's, and under whose roof of thatch Jesus resided with his mother—in all probability then a widow, and, like many a widow since then, cheered by the love and supported by the labors of a dutiful son. I have no doubt that holy angels, turning their wings away from lordly mansions and the proud palaces of kings, often hovered over that peaceful home, as still they, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation, do over the humblest abodes of piety. But, so far as this world and its inhabitants were concerned, Jesus passed his days in contented obscurity, unnoticed and unknown, save to the neighbors, whose esteem he could not fail to win by his pure life, and gentle temper, and holy manners. He was to grow in favor with God and man. All Nazareth regarded him as a paragon of human virtues, and many a mother pointed to Mary's son as the pattern her own lads should copy.

How wonderful it is to transport ourselves back, in fancy, some eighteen hundred years, to that small town; and on asking, with the Greeks, to "see Jesus," to be conducted to a humble dwelling, where chips of wood, and squared logs, and unbarked trunks of trees lying about, in the oak, and olive, and cedar, and sycamore that had fallen to his axe, point out "the carpenter's." By the door, and under a bowering vine, which, trained beneath the eaves over some rude trellis-work, forms a grateful shade from the noon-day sun, a widow sits—her fingers employed in weaving, but an expression in her face and eye which indicates a mind engaged in far loftier objects, thoughts deeper, holier, stranger, than a buried husband, and a widow's grief. She rises, lifts the latch, and, stooping, we enter that lowly door; and there, bending to his work, we see the carpenter—in him the Son of the Most High God! Time was, when he set his compass on the deep; time was, when he stood and measured the earth; and now, with line, and compass, and plane, and hatchet, the sweat dropping from his lofty brow, he who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is, in the guise of a common tradesman, bends at a carpenter's bench. How low he stooped to save us!

The world was once astonished to see a king stoop to such work. The founder of the Russian empire left his palace and capital, the seductive pleasures and all the pomp of royalty, to acquire the art of ship-building in the dockyard of a Dutch sea-port. He learned it, that he might teach it to his subjects; he became a servant that he might be the better master, and lay in Russia the foundations of a great naval power. Nor has his country been ungrateful; her capital, which bears his name, is adorned with a monument to his memory, massive as his mind; and she has embalmed his deathless name in her heart and in her victories. Yet, little as many think of Jesus, lightly as they esteem him, a far greater sight is here. There, in a king becoming a subject that his subjects might find in him a king, there was much for men; but here, there is much both for men and angels to wonder at, and praise through all eternity. The Son of God stoops to toil. What an amazing scene! Henceforth, let honest labor feel itself ennobled; let no man, whatever rank he has attained, blush for the meanness of his origin, or be ashamed of his father's trade; let the sons of toil lift their heads before the overweening pride of birth or wealth, and feel themselves stand taller on the earth; let the idle learn to do some good in this world, and turn their brains and hands to some useful purpose; above all, there let sinners behold a marvelous, most affecting exhibition of the condescension and love of God. This carpenter of Nazareth is He whom the apostle calls "the first-born of every creature;" and "by him," he adds, "were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Let us now consider the meaning of this expression, " the first-born of every creature," and let me shew—

I. What the expression does not and can not mean.

The first-born of every creature! A strange expression! and one which, seeming to assign our Lord a place among creatures, sounds so strangely that, in some degree perplexed, we are ready to ask what the apostle can mean by applying such a questionable term to the eternal Son of God? For, though he honors him with the foremost place, still he seems to place him in the rank of creatures.

Now, there are those who say that Christ was a *mere man;* and this expression, beyond all doubt, cuts the ground out from below their feet. The first-born of every creature—these words, assigning to our Lord, at the very least, the highest place among the highest angels, do not leave the Socinian an inch of ground to stand on. But do they not, it may be asked, seem to countenance the Arian heresy—the doctrine of those who hold that, although the highest and noblest of all created things, our Lord, notwithstanding, is still a creature? Is it so? Have we mistaken his true character? Shall we find, in going to glory, that, as ardent love is prone to do, we have exaggerated his excellences; and that while another occupies the throne of heaven, Jesus is but the first in her noble peerage, the highest and oldest of her ancient nobility? Even as being the first of creatures in point of rank and age, as one who dwelt with God when there was none other than himself, as one whose life dates back beyond the far remote period when seas first rolled, and stars shone, and angels sang, Jesus were an object, next to God he were the object of our deepest interest. Yet if our blessed Lord is only a creature, however great his power, exalted his rank, pure his nature, lofty his intellect, and incalculable the years of his age, I cannot trust him with my soul; I cannot depend on him for salvation; I cannot, dare not worship him, nor overleap this barrier, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

The Apostle John once saw a strange sight in heaven. Yet, if, as the first-born of every creature, our Lord be but a creature, nor hold divinity within a human shrine, I undertake to show you one yet more strange. There appeared, says the apostle, a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pain to be delivered. That in heaven! Yet, if Jesus, though created prior to all others, and in rank next therefore to God, is, after all, but a creature, this mystic woman, so superbly clad and crowned, so strangely pregnant and pained in heaven, offers no wonder so inexplicable as these angels do, who worship at the Saviour's feet; nor in that upper world, where there are neither births nor burials, do her birth-pang cries sound so strange in my ears, as that command from the excellent majesty, Let all the angels of God worship him. If he is not God, how can the law, which forbids me to worship any but God, allow to angels what it denies to man? Can that be right in them which is wrong in us? Can that be true worship in heaven which were idolatry on earth? If it be sin to render divine worship to a creature here, it appears to me that it would be but further wrong, and a deeper wrong, an aggravation of the sin, to worship one in heaven; and, therefore, startled by an expression which seems to rank our Lord with creatures, we might, at the first blush of the thing, address Paul in the words of the men of Athens.

Having astonished her philosophers, having preached in Jesus and resurrection from the grave a doctrine which her boldest spirits had never ventured to imagine, and having, by news such as these news-seekers had never dreamed of, thrown the city into commotion, they hurried him away to the Areopagus, saying, Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. We might be disposed to say the same to Paul. He brings strange tidings to our ears—he calls Christ "the first-born of creatures." What does he mean? Well, what he does not mean is very plain from the way in which he conjoins this verse with the next. In the same breath, and as part of the same sentence, the apostle says that He created all things. Created all things! But he could not create himself, and he was therefore himself uncreated; and Paul therefore never could mean to say that our Lord, however high might be the rank assigned him, was to be placed in the rank of creatures. No man inspired of God, no logician like the apostle, no person even of common sense, could write, nor would men of ordinary reason and intelligence believe, a thing so absurd and self-contradictory as, that anything could create itself, or a thing created possess creating power. To create, to call something out of nothing, be it a dying spark or a blazing sun, a dew-drop cradled in a lily's bosom, or the vast ocean in the hollow of God's hand, mole-hill or mountain, the dancing notes of a sunbeam or the rolling planets of a system, a burning seraph or a feeble glow-worm, one of the ephemera that takes wing in the morning and is dead at night, or one of the angels that sang when our Lord was born; whatever be the thing created, the power to create is God's, the act of creation his; and, therefore, since Paul says that Jesus Christ created all things, he cannot mean to depose our Lord from the throne of divinity, and lower God's only begotten son to the level of a created being.

II. Consider what this phrase, "the first-born of every creature," does mean.

Eli trembled for the ark of God. And dear as that ark, which rash hands had borne into the battle-field, to the devout, blind old priest, is our Lord's divinity to us. The loss of that broke his neck, the loss of this would break our hearts. But this expression gives no cause for anxiety about Christ's honors. It does not detract from, but rather illustrates his divinity; and is a figure of speech, under which that doctrine lies as firm, solid, immovable, as the living rock beneath the flush of flowers and the green sward that cover it. Paul has clothed the doctrine in a Jewish metaphor, and to understand it aright, we must examine it, not with Christian, but with Jewish eyes. For that purpose, let us study this expression by the light of these two cases:—

Isaac is old and blind. He is sitting in his tent like a man who is making his will—engaged, although death was yet distant, in deathbed arrangements. His youngest son, who has passed himself off for his elder brother, and thereby stolen that brother's rights, has just gone out, when Esau, as ignorant as his father of the trick that had been so cleverly but so foully played, enters, saying, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. The old man, knowing that he had already given away the blessing, and believing that he had bestowed it upon Esau, surprised at the request, says, Who art thou? I am thy son, thy first-born Esau, was the answer. It struck Isaac with sudden and dire alarm. Fearful that he had given away what he could not recall, and, under the impression that he was the first-born, had conferred on another rights belonging to Esau, he trembled very exceedingly, and said, "Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. Now, the truth flashed on Esau, and, startling the tents around, he utters "a great and exceeding bitter cry." Unaccustomed to tears, he wept like a woman; and the calm, subdued, but deep grief of the good old man mingled with the wild, sweeping, terrible, impetuous torrent of Esau's passions. But vain the flood of grief! He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. Behold, said Isaac, as he spoke of him who had won the game, and won it by passing himself off as the *first-born*, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given him for servants. And so you see from this case, that to be what Esau really was, and what Jacob said he was, to be the *first-born*, and obtain the rights belonging to that condition, was, as a matter of law and order, to be heir and lord of all.

From the tent of the patriarch, turn now to the palace in Jerusalem. An old man, worn out with wars and troubles fills the throne—the sceptre shaking in his palsied hands. It is necessary that Jehoshaphat —for this old king is he—have a coadjutor and successor; and in seven sons who stand before him, we should think that he had room for choice. What is his decision? To the six younger he gave great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah, but the kingdom, it is said, gave he to Jehoram. And why? What moved him to that? His princely qualities? He had none. He was a bloody monster; for his father's ashes were hardly cold, when he murdered, in cold blood, all these, his brethren. The kingdom, it is said, gave he to Jehoram; because he was the *first-born.* And there, again, you see, that to be the first-born, or to get the rights belonging to that position, was to be heir and lord of all.

Thus, springing from the customs of the country, and by long use and wont, the expression "*first-born,*" became among the Jews just another word for head, lord, sovereign proprietor of all. Of this fact, let me add, we have a most remarkable example in the language of some Jewish rabbins. They have not hesitated to apply the very term to God himself, calling Jehovah The First-Born of the World; and that in honor, in deepest reverence—meaning thereby to exalt him above all creatures, as prince, and king, and Lord of all. See now, how that which seemed at first sight contrary to our Lord's divinity, is not only consistent with it, but confirmatory of it. In pronouncing him "the first-born of every creature," my text exalts Jesus above all creatures, and crowns him divine Head, and Lord, and Sovereign of all. It proclaims one of his many royal titles, and invests him with the insignia of universal empire. Revealing the divine heights from which he descended to the humiliation of Calvary, how should it endear him to our hearts, and recommend him to our glad and grateful acceptance! Calvary grows in wonder, our sins sink deeper in guilt, and our souls rise higher in value, as we contemplate the glory from which he stooped, to bow his head in death upon an ignominious cross; dying, as is never to be forgotten, "the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

III. Our Lord, as in this sense, "the first-born of every creature," existed before all.

One day the door of Egypt's palace is thrown open, and Joseph—a model of beautiful manhood, mind in his eagle eye, strength in his form, majesty in his manner, and on his countenance that lofty look which bespeaks high virtue and integrity—enters, accompanied by his father. The old man's step was slow and feeble; the old man's eyes were dim with age; a few thin silver locks mingled with the snowy beard that flowed down his breast, as he came forward leaning on Joseph's arm, and bending beneath the weight of years. Struck by the contrast, and moved to respect by the patriarch's venerable aspect, Pharaoh accosted him with the question, How old art thou?

Age naturally awakens our respect. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man." That beautiful and divine command touches a chord in every heart, and sounds in harmony with the best feelings of our nature; and so a Greek historian tells how, in the pure and early and most virtuous days of the republic, if an old man entered the crowded assembly, all ranks rise to give room and place to him. Age throws such a character of dignity even over inanimate objects, that the spectator regards them with a sort of awe and veneration. We have stood before the hoary and ivy-mantled ruin of a bygone age with deeper feelings of respect than ever touched us in the marble halls and amid the gilded grandeur of modern palaces; nor did the proudest tree which lifted its umbrageous head and towering form to the skies ever affect us with such strange emotions as an old, withered, wasted trunk that, though hollowed by time into a gnarled shell, still showed some green signs of life. Nor, as we lingered beneath the shades of that ancient yew, could we look on such an old tenant of the earth without feelings of veneration, when we thought how it had been bathed by the sun which shone upon the cross of Calvary, and had stood white with hoar-frost that Christmas night on which angels sang the birth of our Saviour King.

It is a curious thing to stand alone beside a swathed, dark, dusty mummy, which some traveler has brought from its tomb on the banks of the Nile; and to mark with wonder how the gold-leaf still glitters on the nails of the tapering fingers, and the raven hair still clings to the mouldering skull, and how, with the arms peacefully folded on the breast, and the limbs stretched out to their full extent, humanity still retains much of its original form. But when we think how many centuries have marched over that dead one's head; that in this womanly figure, with the metal mirror still beside her, in which she had once admired her departed charms, we see, perhaps, the wife of Joseph, perhaps the royal maid, who, coming to give her beauty to the pure embraces of the Nile, received the infant Moses in her kind protecting arms, our wonder changes into a sort of awe.

Age, indeed, heightens the grandeur of the grandest objects. The bald hoar mountains rise in dignity, the voice of ocean sounds more sublime on her stormy shores, and starry heavens sparkle with brighter splendor, when we think how old they are; how long it is since that ocean began to roll, or these lamps of night to shine. Yet these, the first star that ever shone, nay, the first angel that ever sang, are but things of yesterday beside this manger, where, couched in straw and wrapped in swaddling clothes, a new-born babe is sleeping. "Before Abraham was," or these were, "I am," says Jesus. His mother's maker, and his mother's child, he formed the living womb that gave him birth, and, ten thousand ages before that, the dead rock that gave him burial. A child, yet Almighty God; a son, yet the everlasting Father, his history carries us back into eternity; and the dignities which he left, those glories which he veiled, how should they lead us to adore his transcendent love, and to kneel the lower at his cross to cry, Jesus! thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

The Creator.

For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.—COLOSSIANS i. 16.

As I read my text, it appears to me plainly to assert and clearly to demonstrate, the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. Now the incarnation of God, more than any other truth in the Bible, is one of pure revelation. There are many other doctrines there, of which men, without any aid from inspiration, have arrived at a more or less clear conception; guided to the discovery of them by no other lights than those of reason and of conscience. Therefore Paul says, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

It will make this doctrine stand out all the more prominently as that great and sacred mystery which angels desired to look into, and at the same time serve, what I think an important purpose to direct your attention—

I. To some of those cases which illustrate the harmony between Natural Religion and our Christian faith. Such, for instance, is—

1. The doctrine of the being of a God. I do not need to open the Bible to learn that. It is enough that I open my eyes, and turn them on that great book of nature, where it is legibly written, clearly revealed in every page. God! that word may be read in the stars and on the face of the sun; it is painted on every flower, traced on every leaf, engraven on every rock; it is whispered by the winds, sounded forth by the billows of ocean, and may be heard by the dullest ear in the long-rolling thunder. I believe in the existence of a God, but not in the existence of an atheist; or that any man is so, who can be considered in his sound and sober senses. What should we think of one who attempted to account for any other works of beauty and evident design, as he professes to do for those of God? Here is a classic temple; here stands a statue, designed with such taste and executed with such skill, that one almost expects the marble to leap from its pedestal; here hangs a painting of some dead beloved one, so life-like as to move our tears; here, in Iliad, or Æneid, or Paradise Lost, is a noble poem, full of the grandest thoughts, and clothed in sublimest imagery; here is a piece of most delicate, intricate, and ingenious mechanism. Well, let a man tell me gravely, that these were the work of chance; tell me, when I ask who made them, that nobody made them; tell me, that the arrangement of the letters in this poem, and of the colors in that picture, of the features in the statue, was a matter of mere chance; how I should stare at him? and conclude, without a moment's hesitation, that I had fallen

into the company of a raving madman or of some drivelling idiot. Turning away from such atheistic ravings about the infinitely more glorious works of God, with what delight does reason listen, and with what readiness does she assent, and with what distinct and hearty voice does she echo the closing words of the seraphim's hymn, "the whole earth is full of his glory!"

2. Such also is the doctrine that man is a sinner. Who needs to open the Bible to learn that? It is enough that I open my heart; or read in the light of conscience the blotted record of my past life. "I know and approve the better, and yet follow the worse," was the memorable saying of one of the wisest heathens; yet it did not need any superlative wisdom to arrive at that conclusion. Dr. Livingstone tells us that he found the rudest tribes of Africa, on whose Cimmerian darkness no straggling ray of revealed truth had ever fallen, ready to admit that they were sinners. Indeed, they hold almost everything to be sin which, as such, is forbidden in the word of God. Nor is it possible to read his clear statements on that subject, without arriving at this very interesting and important conclusion, that the ten commandments received from God's own hand by Moses on Mount Sinai, are but the copy of a much older law—that law which the finger of his Maker wrote on Adam's heart, and which, though sadly defaced by the fall, may still, like the inscription on a time-eaten, moss-grown stone, be traced on ours. See how guilt reddens in the blush, and consciousness of sin betrays itself in the downcast look of childhood! Even when they drink up iniquity as the ox drinketh up the water, and wallow in sin as the swine in the mire, there is a conscience within men that convicts of

guilt and warns of judgment. Dethroned, but not exiled, she still asserts her claims, and fights for her kingdom in the soul; and, resuming the seat of lordly judgment, with no more respect for sovereigns than beggars, she summons them to her bar, and thunders on their heads. Felix trembles. Herod turns pale, dreading in Christ the apparition of the Baptist; while Cain, fleeing from his brother's grave, wanders away conscience-stricken into the gloomy depths of the forest and the solitudes of an unpeopled world. Like the ghost of a murdered man, conscience haunts the house that was once her dwelling, making her ominous voice heard at times even by the most hardened in iniquity. In her the rudest savage carries a God within him, who warns the guilty, and echoes these words of Scripture, Depart from evil, and do good. Stand in awe and sin not.

3. Such also is the doctrine that sin deserves punishment. Hell is no discovery of the Bible. In vain do men flee from Christianity to escape what their uneasy conscience feels to be a painful doctrine; one which, in their anxiety to lull conscience asleep, they reject as a doctrine of incredible horrors. If that is an objection to this book, it is an equally valid objection to every religious creed which man ever held and cherished. A great poet has represented with great power the cataracts and rivers, the rocks and glaciers, the hurtling avalanche and rolling thunders of the Alps, and those lovely valleys where summer, attired in a robe of flowers, seems sleeping at the feet of winter, as forming one great choir, and with their various voices all proclaiming, "God;" but it is not less solemn than true, it is no poetic fancy, but a plain strik-

ing fact, that the voices of all nations, of all tongues, rude or polished, have proclaimed a hell. No heathen religion but had its hell, and warned its followers of a place beyond the grave where vice shall meet the doom which it escaped on earth. And in their pictures of the damned, where we see avarice forced to drink molten gold, and eternal vultures tearing at the heart of lust and cruelty, what, again, is the voice of nature but an echo of words we do well to take heed to, Be sure your sin will find you out?

4. Such also is the doctrine that man cannot save himself. In what country, or in what age of heathenism does man appear standing up erect before his God, demanding justice? In none. All her temples had vicarious sacrifices and atoning altars, at which man is on his knees, a suppliant for the mercy of the gods. The very Pagans had more sense than some of us. Glimmering as was the light of nature, they saw things more clearly than to be satisfied with themselves. They never believed that, through their own merits, they could be their own saviours. Hence their costly offerings; their hecatombs of victims; the painful and horrid sacrifices by which they sought to propitiate an angry God. They gave the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul; and, to the shame of those of us who will take no trouble for salvation, and grudge the smallest tax for the cause of Christ, they hesitated at nothing by which they could hope to avert heaven's wrath, and win its favor. The voice of that *cromlech* stone, which still stands on our moors, the centre of the Druid's gray, lonely, mystic circle, and on whose sloping surface I have traced the channel which, when human victims lay bound on this altar, drained off the

blood of beautiful maiden, or grim captive of the fight—the voice of those tears the Indian mother sheds, as she plucks the sweet babe from her throbbing bosom to fling it into the Jumna or Ganges' sacred stream—the voice of those ruined temples which, silent now, once resounded with the groans of expiring victims, what are these, again, but an imperfect echo of the words, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us?

5. Such also is the doctrine that the soul survives the stroke of death. Our spiritual, ethereal essence had its symbol in the heaven-ascending flame which the heathen carved upon their tombs; and their hopes of immortality were expressed, as well by the lamp they lighted amid the gloom of the sepulchre, as by the evergreen garlands that crowned the monuments of their dead. This hope has been a star that shone in every sky; a flower that bloomed in the poorest soil; a flame that burned in the coldest bosom. Immortality! that made heroes of cowards. It imparted to weakness a giant's strength. It made the courage of the bravest warrior burn high in the day of battle. It nerves yonder unbending savage to endure, without a groan to gratify his captors or disgrace his tribe, the tortures of fire and stake. Why do these weeping Greeks approach the dead man, as he lies on his bier for burial, and open his mouth to put in an *obolus?* The coin is passage-money for the surly ferryman who rows the ghosts over Styx's stream. And why, in that forest grave, around which plumed and painted warriors stand unmoved and immovable as statues, do they bury, with the body of the Indian chief, his canoe and bow and arrow? He goes to follow the chase, and

hunt the deer in the spectre land where the Great Spirit lives, and the spirits of his fathers have gone before him. How easy it is to trace in these customs and beliefs, a sort of rude copy of the words, Life and immortality, I shall not die, but live.

6. Although I cannot say that the doctrine of a resurrection is to be placed in the same class with these universal fixed beliefs that so remarkably illustrate the harmony between the sacred Scriptures and the voice of nature, yet may not the hope of a resurrection have sometimes shot, like a bright meteor, across the midnight darkness of heathen grief? That doctrine did, indeed, astonish the Athenians; and its novelty and apparent absurdity led them to pronounce Paul a babbler. And to the eye of sense, no doubt the tomb looks dark as blackest midnight; nor can the fondest wishes detect a sign of life slumbering in the cold ashes of the grave. Yet may not the feelings which prompt to such tender care of the lifeless body, to lay it out so decently, to bury it with funeral honors, to build it a tomb, more keenly to resent dishonor done to the relics of the dead than any done to the persons of the living, have suggested the idea of a resurrection? Might not grief have thus given birth to the blissful thought, that after a long night, the sun that had set would rise again; and that the long winter would be followed by a spring, when, like the beautiful flowers that have hid their heads in the ground, the dead would leave their graves to live and bloom anew?

No such truth might be hidden, as one of the ancient mysteries in the heathen legends of the Phœnix that sprung from its ashes into new life; yet there are things in nature which suggest a resurrection of the dead. Such is the well-known analogy presented by the changes which many creatures undergo. The insect, at first a creeping worm, crawls on the earth, its home the ground, or some humble plant or decaying matter, which feeds its voracious appetite. The time of its first change arrives. It weaves itself a shroud; it makes itself a coffin; and under the soil, in some cranny of the wall, in a convenient fissure of rock or tree, as in a catacomb, it finds a quiet grave. There, shrouded, and coffined, and buried, and to all appearance dead, it lies till its appointed change. The hour arrives. It bursts these cerements; and a pure, winged, beautiful creature, it leaves them, to roam henceforth in sunny skies, and find its bed in the soft bosom, and its food in the nectar of odorous flowers. Why should not that change, or the analogy which Paul found also in following nature, have suggested to the heathen what they illustrate to us—a resurrection? He saw our grave in the furrow of the plough; our burial in the corn dropped into the soil; our decay in the change undergone by the seed; and our resurrection, when, bursting its sheath and pushing aside the clod, it rises green and beautiful, to wave its head in summer days, high above the ground that was once its grave. That which thou sowest, he says, is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.

Different, differing much from these, the doctrine of

God incarnate is one which nature nowhere teaches us; neither by analogy, nor reason, nor intuition, nor conscience. Our proofs of this doctrine, therefore, must be sought for in Scripture, and all our ideas concerning it drawn thence. This mystery, which angels desired to look into, is one to be approached with the faith of a little child whom his father has taken out beneath the starry sky, to tell the wondering boy that these little, bright, twinkling lights are suns big and blazing as our own. A mystery this, to be approached with the deepest gratitude by those, whom to save from unutterable woe, the great God veiled his glory, and became a man to die. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Now, in illustration of this doctrine I remark—

II. That the word of God, both here and elsewhere, attributes the work of creation to Jesus Christ.

Our Lord has been sometimes connected with creation more in beautiful fancies than by plain strong facts. There is a flower, for example, one of the most complex, yet most beautiful in nature, which the piety of other days associated with the sufferings and deep love of Calvary. In the form and arrangement of its parts it presents such a remarkable resemblance to the cross and the nails of our Lord's torture, encircled by a halo of floral glory, that, as if it had been originally made to anticipate and afterwards left to commemorate our Redeemer's sufferings, it has received the name of the *passion-flower*. And I remember how, in sweet wooded dell or on the brown heather hill, we were wont to pull up one of the fern tribe, and, having cut its root across, gaze with boyish wonder on the initials of Jesus Christ printed there, black as with ink on the pale wounded stem. Nor are these the only objects in nature that have been associated in some way with our Lord. When the mariner, leaving our northern latitudes, pushes southward to plough a sunnier ocean, he sees a starry cross emerging from the deep ; and as his course tends further southward, it rises and continues to rise higher in the heavens, till, when the pole-star has dipped beneath the wave, he gazes with feelings of awe and wonder on the sign of salvation blazing above his head—its body and arms formed of brilliant stars.

In these things a devout superstition, that loved perhaps more fondly than wisely, sought to gratify its affections. Nor do we despise, but rather respect the feelings which prompted ancient piety even in this way to identify our Lord with the wonderful works of God. It is not, however, in these devout and poetic fancies that we either seek or see our Lord's connection with that kingdom. But as, with the genius that aspires to immortality, and anticipates the admiration of future ages, the painter leaves his name on a corner of the canvas, so Inspiration, dipping her pen in indelible truth, has inscribed the name of Jesus upon all we see —on sun and stars, flower and tree, rock and mountain, the unstable waters and the firm land ; and also on what we do not see, nor shall till death has removed the veil, angels and spirits, the city and heavens of the eternal world. This is no matter of fancy. It is a fact. It is a blessed fact. No voice ever sounded more distinctly to my ear than that of revealed truth, proclaiming Jesus, Lord of all. How plainly is that great truth written on the face of my text! He who runs may read it there. And to the same effect the Scriptures have precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. In seeking examples of this, we are embarrassed, not by the scantiness, but by the abundance of them. And as two or three competent and in every way credible witnesses are held in a court of law to be worth as many as would crowd the court-house, let me adduce two or three passages which ascribe the work of creation to our Lord in language plain as facts, and clear as noonday.

1. In 1 Corinthians viii. 6, Paul says, "there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom are all things, and we by him.*"

2. In Ephesians iii. 9, Paul also says, "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who *created all things by Jesus Christ.*"

3. When our Lord was on his trial, and stood before his judges and false accusers, as a sheep before her shearers, he was dumb, opening not his mouth. He heard them as if he heard them not. Eager, yet afraid to strike, the high-priest at length rose from his throne, and, fixing his eye on the prisoner, said, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God. Whereupon—the first time he broke silence—our Saviour replied, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then, as we are

told, the high-priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy ; what further need have we of witnesses? And now, in seeking to crown Christ with the honors which they there foully denied him how may I borrow the last words from that murderer's mouth, saying, after Paul, in these passages from Corinthians and from Ephesians, has so clearly attributed the work of creation to Jesus, What further need have we of witnesses? But call in the apostle John. Ask him what he has to say on this great subject, what evidence he has to give, what testimony he can bear? How full, distinct, and clear his answer! Speaking by inspiration, and with his finger pointed at Christ, he says, "*All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.*" And thus he writes concerning the very same person of whom, in the same chapter, he says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

Did these holy men anticipate, did they foresee a day when, walking in the light of their own fire, and, in the sparks which they had kindled, presumptuous men would rise up in the church to deny the divinity of our Lord ; and, with that precious doctrine, to deny, in course of time, all the doctrines to which it is the key-stone? It would seem so. Their anxious care to make plain statements still more plain, looks like it. To make assurance doubly sure, to place our faith on a foundation secure against all assaults, I pray you to observe how the evangelist is not content with simply saying that all things were made by Christ but adds, as if to double-lock the door against the approaching heresy, "*without him was not anything made that was made.*" Wonderful news to tell in a sinner's ear! the stupendous fabric of creation, yon starry vault, this magnificent world, were the work of the hands by which, in love of you, he hung, a mangled form, on the cross of Calvary!

No two harps out of heaven or in it ever sounded in more perfect harmony than the words of John and the language of Paul in my text. My text is the statement of John expanded—the bud blown out into a flower—the indestructible precious gold beaten out over a broader surface. And see how the same anxiety appears here also that there shall be no mistake! What care is taken of your faith! Paul would prevent the shadow of a doubt crossing your mind about our Lord having a right to the divine honors of Creator! "By him," he says, "all things were created. Did an angel, standing at his side when he penned these words, stoop down, and whisper in his ear that in coming days men would rise to throw doubt over the truth, and, explaining it away, attempt to rob Jesus of his honor? I know not; but to make the truth still more plain, he adds, "that are in heaven and in earth." Not content with that, he uses yet more comprehensive terms, and to embrace all the regions of God's universe above the earth, and beyond the starry bounds of heaven, he adds, "visible and invisible." Nor leaves his noble task till he has swept the highest and the lowest things, men and worms, angels and insects, all into Christ's hand—adding, "whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers."

Thanks be to God that a doctrine so precious is written in language so plain. As soon may the puny arm of a mortal man pluck the sun from the heavens, as pluck our Lord's divinity out of this text. Well might dying Stephen, gazing through the opened heavens, behold Jesus at the right hand of God. Where else should he see him—the man of sorrows whom Paul here, to our joy, and comfort, and triumph, exalts to the throne of an adoring universe? In the person of Jesus Christ, the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. Take, believers, the full comfort of a doctrine which is so fraught with honor to God and salvation to man. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad. Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice. Are you afraid? Are you in trouble about anything whatever? Are you racked with cares? Do earthly or spiritual fears disturb your peace, and cast a cold dark shadow on your soul? Does your faith faint, stagger? Rise from your knees; go forth this night; leave the cross, that affecting monument of his love, to contemplate the glorious monuments of his power; stand beneath heaven's resplendent arch; and when, led on by the pale evening star, Orion, and Arcturus, and the sweet Pleiades, and all the heavenly host in harmonious order, as to the music of higher spheres, come marching on across the field of darkness, list to the noble utterance of the old Hebrew prophet. In what lofty strains he speaks of your Lord and Saviour! What courage his words inspire, as, raising his arm to the starry skies, he exclaims, "Behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

The End of Creation.

All things were created for Him.—COLOSSIANS i. 16.

WHEN Ulysses returned with fond anticipations to his home in Ithaca, his family did not recognize him. Even the wife of his bosom denied her husband—so changed was he by an absence of twenty years, and the hardships of a long-protracted war. It was thus true of the vexed and astonished Greek as of a nobler King, that he came unto his own, and his own received him not. In this painful position of affairs he called for a bow which he had left at home, when, embarking for the seige of Troy, he bade farewell to the orange-groves and vine-clad hills of Ithaca. With characteristic sagacity, he saw how a bow, so stout and tough that none but himself could draw it, might be made to bear witness on his behalf. He seized it. To their surprise and joy, like a green wand lopped from a willow tree, it yields to his arms; it bends till the bow-string touches his ear. His wife, now sure that he is her long lost and long lamented husband, throws herself into his fond embraces, and his household confess him the true Ulysses.

If I may compare small things with great, our Lord gave such proofs of his divinity when he too stood a stranger in his own house, despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

He bent the stubborn laws of nature to his will. He proved himself Creator by his mastery over creation. The winds that sweep the deep, and the free wild sea they sweep alike controlled, leprosy and shaking palsy healed, the rolling eye of madness calmed, the shrouded corpse and the buried dead restored to life by a word, calmly spoken after the manner and with the power of a master—these things leave one to wonder that the spectators did not fall down to worship; and, recognizing God in the guise of man, say, the voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. If nothing could be more sublime than that scene on the Lake of Galilee, when, tranquil in aspect, Jesus stood on the bow of the reeling boat, and while the storm played around, and the spray flew in white sheets over his naked head, calmly eyed the war of elements, and raising his hand, said, "Peace, be still!" could anything be more conclusive than the evidence which these waves and winds afforded, that the Master himself was come home? No clearer shone the stars that night, mirrored in the placid waters. There, the winds lulled and the wild waves at rest, deep silence spake. By that sudden hush, nature proclaimed him God, Lord, Creator of all. Declared to be so by inspired tongues, and by such strange witnesses as winds and waves, devils, disease, death, and the grave—heaven concurs in their testimony; by the voices of its saints and angels, of its worship, hymns, harps, and hallelujahs, proclaiming him Creator and Lord of all.

Let us in imagination pass the angel guardians of those gates where no error enters, and, entering that upper sanctuary which no discord divides, no heresy disturbs, let us find out who worship, and who is worshipped there. The law, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve, extends to heaven as well as to earth; so that if our Lord is only the highest of all creatures, we shall find him on his knees—not the worshipped, but a worshipper; and from his lofty, and lonely, and to other creatures unapproachable pinnacle, looking up to God, as does the highest of the snow-crowned Alps to the sun, that, shining far above it, bathes its head in light. We have sought him, I shall suppose, in that group where his mother sits with the other Marys, sought him among the twelve apostles, or where the chief of apostles reasons with angels on things profound, or where David, royal leader of the heavenly choir, strikes his harp, or where the beggar, enjoying the repose of Abraham's bosom, forgets his wrongs, or where martyrs and confessors, and they which have come out of great tribulation, with robes of purest white, and crowns of brightest glory, swell the song of salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. He is not there. Rising upwards, we seek him where angels hover on wings of light, or, with feet and faces veiled, bend before a throne of dazzling glory. Nor is he there. He does not belong to their company. Verily, he took not on him the nature of angels.

Eighteen hundred years ago Mary is rushing through the streets of Jerusalem, speed in her steps, wild anxiety in her look, one question to all on her eager lips, "Have you seen my son?" Eighteen hundred years ago, on these same streets, some Greeks accost a Galilean fisherman, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Now, were we, bent like his mother on finding, like these Greeks on seeing him, to stay a passing angel, and accost him in the words, "Sir, we would see Jesus," what would he do? How would his arm rise, and his finger point us upward to the throne as he fell down to worship, and worshipping, to swell the flood of song which in this one full stream mingles the names of the Father, and of the Son—Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Such a glorious vision, such worship, the voices that sounded on John's ear as the voice of many waters, the distant roar of ocean, are in perfect harmony with the exalted honor and divine offices which Paul assigns to our Lord in the words, All things were created for him.

In directing your attention now to the purpose for which Christ created all things, I remark—

I. That my text furnishes another proof of our Lord's divinity.

He is in the position of a servant who works for others; he of a master, who by other hands, or his own, works for himself. Applying that remark to the case before us, look to the condition of man. Whatever office man fills in providence, he is a servant; and on crowned monarchs, who are, and should consider themselves, but upper servants, as well as on the lowest menials, Paul lays this duty, Whether, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. God being our end, as well as our beginning, we are to do nothing for ourselves; but everything for him. Nor do angels, though holding a much higher rank in creation, differ much from us in this respect. Far from it. Even as we see that law which rolls every drop of water to the ocean, and rounds the tear on our cheek, illustrated on its grandest scale in those skies where suns roll, and stars rise, and wandering comets travel, so, if we would see the law of love producing perfect service, and perfect servants, we must look to heaven. Nor wing flies, nor harp sounds, nor heart beats yonder, but in divine harmony with the great law of God's moral kingdom, Do all to the glory of God. They are all and ever engaged in God's service. Hear what is said of them, "He shall give his angels charge over thee," "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify," "See thou do it not," said the angel, "for I am thy fellow-servant," "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Thus, whether they descend on our world to open the bars of a prison, or to roll back the gates of the sea, to predict the birth of a Samson, or celebrate the advent of a Saviour, to blow the coal that dresses Elijah's meal, or kindle the fire that lays Sodom in ashes, to sing "peace" over the rude cradle of a new-born babe, or sound the trump that rends the tomb and wakes the dead, they do nothing for themselves. Not ashamed of their service, but glorying in it, they respond to the call, Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure.

Now, whose pleasure does my text represent our Lord as doing? For whom, in the work of creation, does it represent him as acting? All things were created not only *by* him, but *for* him. *For* him! What a depth of meaning, what a manifest divinity, in that plain, little word! "*For* him!" You might pile one lofty expression on another up to heaven, but you could say nothing more of God. Nay, it is said of God, as his own peculiar and divine prerogative, "The Lord hath made all things *for himself*."

Some have attempted to evade the argument for

Christ's divinity, which is based on the fact of his having created all things. They cannot deny the fact, but they deny the inference. They object and allege that, although Christ created all things, he did so not by his own inherent power, but by such power as Elijah received from God to restore the widow's son, or Elisha to lay bare the bed of Jordan. But, apart from other answers with which such objectors may be triumphantly met, observe how my text cuts the ground out below their feet. Did Elijah bring back the dead, and his successor divide the flood for themselves? Was it for their own glory, or for any other ends of their own? That will not be alleged. If not, then there is no analogy whatever between their miraculous and our Lord's creating works.

If our Lord Jesus Christ was other and less than God, then, in kindling yonder sun, in lighting up the starry sky, he no more acts for himself than the domestic does, who, appearing at my call, lights my lamp, or stoops on the hearth-stone to kindle my fire. It is the very nature of a creature to be a dependent, and hold a servant's place. Nor, as I read my Bible, was any man ever more justly condemned to die than Jesus, if he were but a man. In that case he did undoubtedly lay himself open to the charge of blasphemy, since—as the Jews truly averred, and he never denied, nor so much as attempted to explain it away—he made himself the Son of God, "equal with God." No doubt our Lord did that; in such plain terms claiming divine equality, as to justify the use by Paul of this bold language, "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. And, as the rainbow looks the brighter the blacker the cloud it spans, the majesty of his claim is brought out by the meanness of the circumstances in which it was made. Deserted by the world, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, dependent on a few humble followers for the most common necessaries of life, within some hours of an ignominious end, his foot already on the verge of the grave, he rises to the loftiness of Godhead ; and, turning an eye that was to be soon darkened in death on earth and heaven, he claims a community of property with God. All things, he says, that the father hath are mine. To the "all mine are thine," this dying man adds, "thine are mine." He speaks to God. Thine, thy eternity, thy throne, thy glory, thy crown, thy sceptre, all are mine. Great words, pregnant with the strongest consolation and most glorious truths! For, if in the very nature of things all that is God's is Christ's, and according to the terms of the New Covenant, all that is Christ's is ours, these words draw everything that belongs to God into the hands of the humblest believer! What a faith is that! What comfort should it give you! What courage should it impart to you! What gratitude should it beget in you! Rich amid poverty, full in emptiness, and in weakness strong, with what blessed peace may the believer lie in Christ's arms, saying with David, I will fear none evil ; or with Paul, as he addresses himself to work or war, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

II. My text teacheth us that the glory of God was the original purpose of creation ; "All things were created—for him."

Sin has to some extent blighted the beauty of creation. Still, to borrow the words of the Psalmist, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Nor is it distance that here lends enchantment to the view. On the contrary, the more closely the works of God are examined, the higher our admiration rises, and the less we fear that true science will ever appear as the antagonist, and not the ally of the faith. Whether we turn the telescope on heavens, studded so full of stars as to present the appearance of gold-dust scattered with lavish hand on a dark purple ground, or turn the microscope on such comparatively humble objects as a plant of moss, a drop of ditch water, the scaly armor of a beetle, a spider's eye, the down of a feather, or the dust on a butterfly's wing, such divine beauty, wisdom and glory burst into view, that childhood's roving mind is instantly arrested; the dullest are moved to wonder, the most grovelling souls take wing and rise up to God. He rushes, indeed, into our souls by the open portal of every sense. We see a divine glory in worms, and unapproachable excellence in the Almighty's lowest works. And in the grand roar of the storm, the everlasting boom of ocean breakers, the sudden crash and far-rolling peals of thunder, the soft murmuring of gentle brooks, the gleesome melody of budding woods, the thrilling music of the lark, as, like a parting spirit, she spurns the earth, and wings her flight to heaven, nature echoes the close of the angel's hymn, The whole earth is full of his glory.

When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy over our new-born world, that, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory, formed, perhaps, the burden of their song. And when Adam sat by his beautiful bride, and the shaggy lion crouched like a dog at their feet, and the beams of the setting sun threw a golden splendor over their bower of eglantine and roses, and the feathered tribes from all the groves of paradise poured forth rich gushes of sweetest melody, perhaps, ere they lay down to rest with their arms and hearts entwined, they took it for their vesper hymn, singing, while God and delighted angels listened, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.

The harp of Eden, alas! is broken. Unstrung and mute, an exiled race have hung it on the willows, and Ichabod stands written now in the furrows of man's guilty forehead, and on the wreck of his ruined estate. Some things remain unaffected by the blight of sin, as God made them for himself; the flowers have lost neither their bloom nor fragrance, the rose smells as sweet as it did when bathed in the dews of paradise; and seas and seasons, obedient to their original impulse, roll on as of old to their Maker's glory. But from man, alas! how has the glory departed! Look at his body when the light of the eye is quenched, and the countenance is changed, and the noble form lies festering in corruption—mouldering into the dust of death. Or, change, still more hideous, look at his soul! The spirit of piety dead, the mind under a dark eclipse, hatred to God rankling in that once loving heart, it retains but some vestiges of its original grandeur, just enough, like the beautiful tracery and noble arches of a ruined pile, to make us feel that glory once was there, and now is gone. What glory does God get from many of us? Like a son who is bringing his father's gray hairs to the grave, a daughter who, sunk into the lowest degradation, is the shame of her family, we are a dishonor and a disgrace. In applying such terms to sinners, I am not employing language too strong. God uses still stronger terms. As if his were the feelings of a father who wishes that he had been childless, of a mother who esteems the barren happy, it is written, "It *repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved* him at his heart." What a horrible thing is sin!

Yet God's object in creating man was not defeated; and in illustration of that, I remark—

III. That God will make even the wicked and their sins redound to his glory.

A strange machine is this of providence! How slowly some wheels move, while others whirl round so rapidly that the eye cannot catch the flying spokes: some are turning in one direction, and others in the very opposite. Here, sight to wonder at, Virtue is struggling with the temptations of poverty, and Piety sits a mendicant, clothed in rags, and covered with a mass of sores. There, again, we see the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; and not seldom like the deadly upas, which is said to poison the air around it, and kill all that comes within its noxious shade. In the arrangements of this world it often seems as if confusion reigned, and sometimes confusion worse confounded. Sin triumphs, and in the success of the ungodly, who have no changes, and no bands in their death, men and devils seem to defeat the purposes of God.

Defeat the purposes of God! Impossible. As you stood some stormy day upon a sea-cliff, and marked the giant billow rise from the deep to rush on with foaming crest, and throw itself thundering on the trembling shore, did you ever fancy that you could stay its course, and hurl it back into the depths of ocean? Did you ever stand beneath the leaden, lowering cloud, and mark the lightning's leap, as it shot and flashed, dazzling, athwart the gloom, and think that you could grasp the bolt and change its path? Still more foolish and vain his thought, who fancies that he can arrest or turn aside the purposes of God, saying, What is the Almighty that we should serve him? Let us break his bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from us. Break his bands asunder! How he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh! Poor, beguiled, benighted sinner, do you suppose, that in the full swing and unbridled license of your passions you are serving yourself, are your own free master? Be assured that it is not otherwise with you than it was with Pilate, and the chief priests, and the Jews, and Judas also. Unconscious of the high hand that controlled their movements, these enemies of God were gathered together to do that which, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, was appointed to be done.

Do you, for instance, injure a godly man? God is using you to train up his child in the grace of patience. Do you defraud him? God is using you to detach his heart from the world, and to loosen the roots that bind his affections to the earth. Do you deceive him? God is using you to teach him not to put his trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. Do you wound his feelings? You are a knife in God's hand to let the sap flow more freely in a bark-bound tree, or to prune its branches that it may bring forth more fruit. Messenger of Satan! dost thou buffet an apostle? God uses thee to keep him humble, and to teach him to wear his honors meekly. Oppressor of the church! dost thou cast an apostle into prison? God uses thee, thy dungeon, and thy chains, to show how he will answer prayer, and bring his people eventually out of their sorest troubles,—saving, as he saved Peter, at the very uttermost. King of Egypt! with thy guards around thee, flattered by thy supple courtiers, backed by thy boastful magicians, with thy haughty looks art thou thwarting God, and, in hardening thy heart and refusing to let Israel go, promoting and securing thine own ambitious, selfish, grasping ends? Fool! what a mistake! In very deed, said the Lord by Moses, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. Pharaoh's obstinacy affords the occasion, of which God makes use, to turn a great kingdom into a stage whereon to display the majesty of his power. What must have been the surprise, what the rage, what the mortification of that imperious tyrant, to find himself, after all that he and his bleeding country had suffered, but a mere tool in the hands of the Hebrew's God! God took a revenue of glory out of him, as he will sooner or later do out of all his enemies.

No man liveth for himself. There is a sense in which that is universally true. And the most bold and God-hating sinners may rest assured that when the complicated machine of providence has done its work, and the secret purposes of God are fully completed, and things old and worn out are replaced by a new heaven and a new earth, then it shall be seen how the Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Oh that men would turn now and seek his mercy—his gracious, much-needed, freely-offered, all-sufficient, soul-saving mercy. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way. Why, when God is willing to forgive and forget, why, when he has sent his Son to seek you, and sends his Spirit to plead with you, why should you perish? Reject salvation, and you must perish. For, though unbelievers and the wicked are after a fashion serving God, it is as the rod which a kind father reluctantly uses to chasten his son, and which, when it has answered its purpose, he breaks in two, and casts into the fire.

IV. Since Christ hath made all things for himself, his people are emphatically called to consecrate themselves, and their all, to his glory.

To this duty you are called, by the obligations of both a natural and spiritual creation; by your descent from the first, and also from the second Adam. To live, to watch, to work, to suffer, and to sacrifice both for Him who, loving us, spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, and for Him also who, loving us, washed us from our sins in his own blood, is our plain bounden duty; let me rather say, for duty is a cold word, should be our daily and supreme delight. I do not say that it is plain sailing to heaven. I do not say but that the duty we owe to Christ may and shall expose us to what the world accounts and what flesh and blood feel, to be pain? Be it so! What pains Jesus endured, what sacrifices he submitted to for us!

Besides, how should it make us take suffering joyfully to think that it is those who are crucified with him on earth that shall be crowned with him in heaven. None else. They win in this game that lose. They live in this warfare that die. If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him. He that loseth his life shall find it.

Surely, if there be such things as true, tender, sacred, eternal obligations, they bind those who, to speak the plain truth, but for Christ had been suffering hell's intolerable torment, had never even hoped to set foot in heaven. What owest thou thy Lord? You cannot tell that. Therefore be your money millions or mites, be your talents ten or two, be your hearts young and green, or seared and withered, lay them at a Saviour's feet. Let his glory be your glorious aim! Raised far above the common objects and base pursuits of the world, this is an end worth living for. A life such as that, elevating and ennobling the humblest lot, shall command the regards, and fix on a man the gaze of angels. Lofty ends give dignity to the lowest offices. It is, for instance, an honest, but you would not call it an honorable occupation, to pull an oar; yet if that oar dips in a yeasty sea to impel the life-boat over mountain waves and through roaring breakers, he who has stripped for the venture, and, breaking away from weeping wife and praying mother and clinging children, has bravely thrown himself into the boat to pull for yonder wreck, and pluck his drowning brothers from the jaws of death, presents, as from time to time we catch a glimpse of him on the crest of the foaming billow, a spectacle of grandeur which would withdraw our eyes from the presence even of a queen, surrounded with all the blaze and glittering pomp of royalty.

Take another illustration, drawn from yet humbler life. Some years ago, on a winter morning, two children were found frozen to death. They were sisters. The elder child had the younger seated in her lap, closely folded within her lifeless arms. She had stripped her own thinly-clad form to protect its feebler life, and, to warm the icy fingers, had tenderly placed its little hands in her own bosom; and pitying men and weeping women did stand and gaze on the two dead creatures, as, with glassy eyes and stiffened forms, they reclined upon the snow wreath—the days of their wandering and mourning ended, and heaven's own pure snow no purer than that true sister's love. They were orphans; houseless, homeless beggars. But not on that account, had I been there to gaze on that touching group, would I have shed one tear the less, or felt the less deeply, that it was a display of true love, and of human nature in its least fallen aspect, which deserved to be embalmed in poetry, and sculptured in costliest marble.

Yes; and however humble the Christian's walk, or mean his occupation, it matters not. He who lives for the glory of God, has an end in view which lends dignity to the man and to his life. Bring common iron into proper contact with the magnet, it will borrow the strange attractive virtue, and itself become magnetic. The merest crystal fragment, that has been flung out into the field and trampled on the ground, shines like a diamond when sunbeams stoop to kiss it. And who has not seen the dullest rain-cloud, when it turned its weeping face to the sun, change into glory, and, in the bow that spans it, present to the eyes of age and infancy, alike of the philosopher who studies, and of the simple joyous child who runs to catch it, the most brilliant and beautiful phenomenon in nature? Thus, from what they look at and come in contact with, common things acquire uncommon glory.

Live, then, "looking unto Jesus," live for nothing less and nothing lower than God's glory; and these ends will lend grandeur to your life, and shed a holy, heavenly lustre on your station, however humble it be. Yes. A man of piety may be lodged in the rudest cottage, and his occupation may be only to sweep a street, yet let him so sweep a street, that, through the honest and diligent doing of his duty, God is glorified, and men are led to speak and think better of religion, and he forms a link between earth and heaven. He associates himself with holy angels. And, though at a humble distance, treads in the footsteps of that blessed Saviour, who, uniting divinity to humanity, as our Maker made all things for himself, and, as our brother man, whether he ate or drank or whatsoever he did, did all to the glory of God; and doing so, left us an example that we should follow his steps. Go and do likewise. Glorify God, and you shall enjoy him. Labor on earth, and you shall rest in heaven. Christ judges them to be the men of worth who are the men of work. Be thy life then devoted to his service. Now for the work, hereafter for the wages; earth for the cross, heaven for the crown. Go thy way, assured that there is not a prayer you offer, nor a word you speak, nor a foot you walk, nor a tear you shed, nor a hand you hold out to the perishing, nor a warning you give to the careless, nor a wretched child you pluck from the streets, nor a visit paid to the widow or fatherless, nor a loaf of bread you lay on a poor man's table, that there is nothing you do for the love of God and man, but is faithfully registered in the chronicles of the kingdom, and shall be publicly read that day when Jesus, calling you up perhaps from a post as mean as Mordecai's, shall crown your brows before an assembled world, saying, Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor.

Christ in Providence.

By him all things consist. — COLOSSIANS i. 17.

GOD'S work of providence is "his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing of all his creatures and all their actions." It has no Sabbath. No night suspends it, and from its labors God never rests. If, for the sake of illustration, I may compare small things with great, it is like the motion of the heart. Beating our march to the grave, since the day we began to live, the heart has never ceased to beat. Our limbs grow weary; not it. We sleep; it never sleeps. Needing no period of repose to recruit its strength, by night and day it throbs in every pulse; and, constantly supplying nourishment to the meanest as well as to the noblest organs of our frame, with measured, steady, untired stroke, it drives the blood along the bounding arteries, without any exercise of will on our part, and even when the consciousness of our own existence is lost in dreamless slumbers.

If philosophy is to be believed, our world is but an outlying corner of creation; bearing, perhaps, as small a proportion to the great universe, as a single grain bears to all the sands of the sea-shore, or one small quivering leaf to the foliage of a boundless forest. Yet, even within this earth's narrow limits, how vast the work of Providence! How soon is the mind lost in contemplating it! How great that Being whose hand paints every flower, and shapes every leaf; who forms every bud on every tree, and every infant in the darkness of the womb; who feeds each crawling worm with a parent's care, and watches like a mother over the insect that sleeps away the night in the bosom of a flower; who throws open the golden gates of day, and draws around a sleeping world the dusky curtains of the night; who measures out the drops of every shower, the whirling snow-flakes, and the sands of man's eventful life; who determines alike the fall of a sparrow and the fate of a kingdom; and so overrules the tide of human fortunes, that whatever befall him, come joy or sorrow, the believer says, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.

In ascribing this great work to Jesus Christ, my text calls you to render him divine honors. In the hands that were once nailed to the cross, it places the sceptre of universal empire; and on those blessed arms that, once thrown around a mother's neck, now tenderly enfold every child of God, it hangs the weight of worlds. Great is the mystery of godliness! Yet so it is, plainly written in the words, By him all things consist. By him the angels keep their holiness, and the stars their orbits; the tides roll along the deep, and the seasons through the year; kings reign, and princes decree justice; the church of God is held together, riding out at anchor the rudest storms; and by him, until the last of his elect are plucked from the wreck, and his purposes of mercy are all accomplished, this guilty world is kept from sinking under a growing load of sins.

"By him all things consist." Wonderful words, as spoken of one who, some eighteen centuries ago, was a houseless wanderer, a pensioner on woman's charity, and not seldom without a place where to lay his head! Yet how clearly do these words attest his dignity and divinity? More could not be said of God; and Paul will not say less of Christ. Nor, great and glorious as they are, do they stand alone. Certainly not. In language as lofty, and ascribing to Jesus honors no less divine, the apostle thus writes to the Hebrews, "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and *upholding all things by the word of his power*, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.' How wonderful! He left a grave to ascend the throne; he exchanged the side of a dying thief for the right hand of God; he dropped a reed to assume the sceptre of earth and heaven; he put off a wreath of thorns to put on a sovereign's crown; and, in that work of providence to which I would now turn your attention, you behold Him, who died to save the chief of sinners, made "Head over all things to the church."

I. His providence appears in those extraordinary events which lead his people, and often compel his enemies, to acknowledge the hand of God.

I do not speak of miraculous events;—as when the sea opened her gates to the flying Israelites, and man's extremity proved God's opportunity; as when the ravens, deserting their nests and young to cater for the prophet, hunted the fields to supply his table; as when hungry lions, like gentle lambs, crouched at

Daniel's feet; as when the sun set at noonday over the red cross of Calvary, or shone at midnight on the hills of Gideon. It is to another kind of events that I refer; and of these—

1. Job's history furnishes a notable example. Satan has gone forth from the presence of the Lord, armed with this commission, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. The devil can never go a step further against the saints than God chooses to give him chain. That is great comfort. Yet how ruthlessly, how pitilessly, how malignantly the Enemy of man used his power on this occasion, you know. The gallant ship that, with songs below, and gay dances on her deck, was sailing on a summer day over a glassy sea, in her sky no portentous clouds, in her snowy sheets but wind enough to waft her home, and of which, by nightfall, the only vestiges are some broken timbers afloat in the foam that the wild waves are grinding on the horrid reef, presents a striking image of the change that one short, eventful day brought on the house and fortunes of this man of God. One following hard upon another, like successive shocks of an earthquake, the messengers of disaster come. Ruin, ruin, is on their lips, as, pale with terror, panting for breath, they arrive with their tidings, and that doleful echo, that ever-recurring close of the woful tale, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Cattle, flocks, camels gone, all his property sunk, Job is a beggared man. Yet his children are safe; and with seven gallant sons and three fair daughters, he still is rich. These spared, let all else perish. But ah! the next wave, towering, cresting high over head, falls on his laboring bark, and, sweep-

ing the deck clean, leaves none standing there but himself and a frantic mother; nor is theirs the consolation of the mother who, reaching the shore with her living babe, presses it to her bosom, and holds herself compensated for all other losses. They are dead, cries the last messenger; they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Dead? We almost expect to see himself fall dead; stunned, killed by this crowning, this overwhelming stroke. But no. Greatest of heroes, spectacle for angels to admire, pattern for believers to imitate in the hour of their most adverse fortunes, he arose and worshipped—arose as the ball which rebounds the higher the harder it is struck; as the eagle which reaches her loftiest flight not in serene, but in tempestuous skies. Owning the Providence in whose hand Sabean and Chaldean, fiery thunderbolt and roaring whirlwind, were only instruments, Job bows before the throne of God, and says, with a patience more uncommon even than his trials, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

2. The history of God's church is filled with remarkable illustrations of marvelous, though not miraculous providences. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," said our Lord; and when—now sleeping, now gently breathing, now sighing as in sorrow, now shrieking as in pain, now roaring in mad-like fits of rage, and now howling round the house—it shakes every door and window to get in, the wind seems as uncontrolled and uncontrollable a power as any in nature. But when, some three hundred years ago, it rose in its resistless might, and swept down in hurricane gusts from heaven

to scatter the hopes of Rome and the pride of Spain, it was surely, to use the words of scripture, "stormy wind fulfilling his word." I believe that. In that crisis of the church's fate, Popery and secular despotism, ecclesiastical and political tyranny, united their forces, as they now threaten to do again. Their object was to crush the liberties of mankind, and to quench the light of the Reformation in the life-blood of its professors. Never had winds wafted, never, since keel first ploughed them, had the waves borne such a fleet as, armed for that purpose and confident of victory, came ruffling down in the pride of its power on the coasts of England. The hearts of many trembled; and some were but little comforted by the noble attitude in which England rose, headed by her maiden Queen, to meet the danger in the name of God. Who could not fight could pray. Earnest supplications were therefore made continually, nor made in vain. And so, when the cannon's thunder pealed along the deep, and gun to gun, yard-arm to yard-arm, they fought the Spaniard in sight of their homes, One mingled in that protracted battle, as unlooked for by the foe as was the fourth person who walked the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew children in the brave days of old.

God descended into the fight. He did fly upon the wings of the wind, and with the black tempest swept the enemy to destruction. Storm rose and roared upon the back of storm, scattering that boastful navy. Until, where it had ridden in its pride, nothing was seen but the crests of the angry sea; nothing heard but thundering breakers, and the scream of the wild seamew. And while the hurricane was pursuing them along our island, and strewing these northern shores with the corpses and the wreck of that proud Armada, the people of England repaired to the house of God to acknowledge his providence in this memorable deliverance, and sing of the stormy wind fulfilling his word.

3. Again, the finger of God has been often marvelously revealed in the detection and punishment of crime. Men have stood astonished, and have been constrained to say—There was a providence in that. By some remarkable and unlooked-for circumstance, God himself has cleared away every doubt; and said, as it were, with his finger pointed at the confounded, trembling, wretch, Thou, thou art the man! One night, for instance, some years ago, a person in this city awoke to find that his house had been plundered. The alarm was raised, nor was it long ere the officers of justice found a clue. The thief, wounding his hand as he escaped by the window, had left a red witness behind him. The watchman flashed his lantern on the spot. Drop by drop, blood stained the pavement. They tracked it on, and on, and ever on, till their silent guide conducted them along an open passage, and up a flight of steps—stopping at the door of a house. They broke in; and there they found the bleeding hand, the booty, and the pale, ghastly criminal. Now, a shower of rain would have washed away the stain; a fall of snow would have concealed it; the foot of some wretched street-walker, some midnight reveller, would have effaced it; but no, the crime was one of peculiar atrocity, and there God kept the damning spot. And, unless they be forgiven, covered by the righteousness, washed away in the blood of Jesus, so shall your sins find you out. Wash them

away in Calvary's fountain, or they wait to meet you at the bar of judgment. The step of divine justice may be slow, but it is sure, and I implore sinners to flee from the exposures and the wrath to come: for, what saith the scriptures, Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house tops,—God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

Who should not own in such remarkable events the hand of providence? That man incurred double guilt, who, when passing dryshod through the sea between two crystal walls, thought no more of God than you or I, perhaps, have done, when, on a bright summer day, beneath the flickering shade of overhanging trees, and on a carpet of heath and wild flowers, we were threading some mountain gorge. He too, incurred double guilt, who, having risen with the dawn, and left his tent, ere the sun had shot one slanting ray across the desert sands, to gather food fallen fresh from dewy skies, thought no more of God than yonder merry band, that, with talk and songs and laughter, sweep down the golden corn, or, when sheaves are stacked and fields are cleared, with gleesome dances keep harvest-home. "Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her, for she is a king's daughter," were Jehu's orders; and doubly guilty were his messengers if, as they drove off the dogs that were crunching Jezebel's skull, and saw the curse of an avenging prophet, they thought no more of God's righteous judgments, than does the rude, brutal mob which executions gather from low lanes and alleys around a gallows-tree.

It is good to see God's hand in every extraordinary event, but it is better to see his providence in every thing, saying with David, I have set the Lord always before me. How happy is such a frame of mind! I cherish the memory of one over whose chequered life it shed a perpetual sunshine. A widow with a helpless family, she had literally left father and mother, and house and lands, for Jesus' sake, and had had her full share of trials. Yet nothing came wrong to her; nor did leaden cares ever sit long or press heavy on her saintly breast—hers, a bearing that often reminded me of the beautiful words of Luther, when, in an hour of alarm and anxious councils, he pointed his companion to a little bird, that, perched on a bending branch, was pouring forth a gush of melody in the ear of evening, and said, Happy fellow! he leaves God to think for him. Do that; leave God to think for you, and to care for you. Let clear-eyed Faith behold Christ on his throne, with the strong hand of a God, and the sympathies of a man guiding in heaven the helm of your fortunes, and you may go to sleep in the rudest storm. What storm should hinder him whose head is pillowed on Jesus' bosom, and who feels himself enfolded in the arms of providence, from fulfilling this high, this happy command, Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Child of God! take your rest. He who keeps watch by you, never sleeps.

II. God in Christ presides over ordinary as well as extraordinary events.

By him all things consist. Every object in nature is impressed with his footprints, and each new day repeats the wonders of creation. Yes; there is not a morning we open our eyes, but they meet a scene as wonderful as that which fixed the gaze of Adam when he awoke into existence. Nor is there an object, be it pebble or pearl, weed or rose, the flower-spangled sward beneath, or the star-spangled sky above, a worm or an angel, a drop of water or a boundless ocean, in which intelligence may not discern, and piety may not adore, the providence of Him who assumed our nature that he might save our souls. If God is not in all the thoughts of the wicked, he is in everything else. And since the comfort of his people rests so much on the conviction that the Lord reigneth, that his hand rules every event, that a wise, and most kind, as well as holy Providence presides over our daily fortunes and all things besides, let me proceed, by some familiar examples, to illustrate that noble truth.

1. Let me show you Providence in a snow-drop—a flower we all know and love, and hail as the fair harbinger of spring. And in this I follow the example of him who extracted from flowers truths more beautiful than their colors, more precious than their most fragrant odors. All the plants that clothe and adorn the earth with such varied beauty, and combining, as is God's way, utility with beauty, supply food to the animal creation, depend for their continued existence on their flowers turning into fruit. Now, the fructification of the snow-drop depends, if I may say so, on the modesty, in it as elsewhere the usual associate of purity, with which, shrinking from its own boldness, it hangs its beautiful head. Let it lift its head up with the pride of a lily, and this herald of spring perishes

from the face of the earth, like the race of a childless man. But God has provided against such an event. Wonderful, and instructive as teaching us how the greatest and smallest things in providence have often mutual and important connections, this vast globe, and that little flower, in regard to their weight, have been calculated the one so to suit the other, that its bells are and must be pendent. Drawn downwards by the force of gravity, they assume a position without which they had produced no fruit, yet one which they had not assumed, had our planet been no larger than Mars or Mercury. See, then, how God takes care of a humble flower! how much more of you and your families, O ye of little faith!

2. Let me take an example from a circumstance which, at first sight, appears to shake rather than to confirm our confidence in a presiding Providence. That plants may produce fruit in our climate, their flowers, warmly wrapped within the folds of the bud, must sleep the winter through—waiting for the genial breath of spring, and the embraces of a summer sun. Well; we are meditating on the care which God takes of many tender plants, by either wrapping them in a warm mantle of snow, or causing them to seek shelter beneath the surface, when our meditations are suddenly arrested, and our trust in God's providence is at first sight perhaps shaken, by a plant which spreads out its blossoms, like unrequited love, to the cold beams of the winter day. The frost has bound the soil, the ice has chained the streams, and the hoary rime, like a work of magic, has turned every tree to silver, and there is not heat enough in the keen cutting air for that unhappy flower to produce fruit. It is with it as

with our souls when God withdraws the joys of salvation and the influences of his Holy Spirit. There is something wrong here? No. The Maker of all has made no mistake. Nor may Deist, Atheist, or sneering scoffer put his foot on that flower, and, to crush with its frail form our faith in providence, ask, Where is now thy God? Ask that plant its history! It speaks with a foreign accent; the truth comes out that God never made it to dwell here; an exile, it has been torn from its native home, and still clings, like other exiles, to the habits and memories of its fatherland. Belonging to a region where the day is longest when ours is shortest, where they pant under summer heat when we are shivering in winter cold, the flowers that it spreads on our snowy ground but show how correctly God had wound it up to blow in its proper *habitat* at the proper season, and how clearly his providence may be seen even in the fading blossoms of a flower. I say again, if God takes such care of plants, how may you trust yourselves and your families to him? What may you not trust to him, who spared nor pains, nor pity, nor care, nor kindness, nor even his beloved Son, but gave him up to death, that you might not perish, but live?

3. Let me select an illustration from the animal kingdom. Over the honeycomb, in which a vulgar taste, in common with the bear, finds only the means to gratify its appetite, the philosopher may bend with admiration and amaze. He can have little reflection who has not marked the beauty and delicacy of those cells, which, though built in the darkness of the hive, and the work of a humble insect, man, with his reason and the aids of art, attempts in vain to imitate. Yet

there is here something more wonderful than beauty Examine them closely. See how each has the same number of sides with its fellow, and is its exact counterpart. In that a child could discern plain evidence of design; but there is a depth of wisdom there which only science can fathom. Repair to the study of a Newton, of one who is tracking that wandering comet on its fiery path into the far realms of space, or weighing, not the Alps or Andes, but worlds in the scales of science, and ask him—for no man else can solve the question, simple as it seems—to find out for you the form of the vessel which combines with the greatest strength the largest capacity? Having wrought out this problem by a long series of abstruse calculations, he presents the result. How wonderful! You find such a vessel in the cell of a bee-hive!

I dare to say that he is a fool who ventures, in the face of such a fact, to deny a providence, or to assert that there is no God. Why, at a period in man's history when he was little better than a naked savage, when he was robbing the beast of his skin for clothing, and of his rocky den for a home, when he had no tools but such as he could fashion from a stone, nor vessels but of the rudest form and the coarsest clay, this humble insect was building the most beautiful fabrics from the most delicate materials, with the skill of an accomplished architect, and according to the laws of a high philosophy. What a proof of an over-ruling providence? and that He, who teaches birds as well as angels to sing, guides the movements of the meanest creatures—presiding in a hive as well as in heaven! Why, then, should God's people ever despond? What can be too hard for them? too heavy for you to bear, too difficult for you to do! He is with you, with whom all things are possible. And if, by the most feeble creatures, he achieves works of such skill and beauty, how may you take heart to believe, that by the aids of his holy Spirit, and the help of the grace promised to earnest prayer, you shall work out even your salvation with fear and trembling; God working in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure?

4. Let me show a divine providence in the most common circumstances of life. Most people are ready to acknowledge the hand of God in such events as disease and death, births and burials, any remarkable escape from danger, some either very favorable or unfavorable turn in their fortunes. Who has not noted down certain occurrences in his history as plainly indicating a providence? Yet the largest number of men have their type in the son rather than the father, of whom this circumstance is told. They had parted in the morning not to meet again till nightfall. On meeting, the son said that he had been most wonderfully preserved; for his horse had thrown him, and but for God's good guardian hand, he had certainly been killed. Whereupon his father replied that he had met with a yet more remarkable providence, had still more cause to praise God; for, he added, addressing the other, whose curiosity was now wound up to the highest pitch in expectation of some strange and stirring story—I have travelled the livelong day, preserved from all alarm or accident whatever. Happy the man who thus sets the Lord always before him!

Now, for an example of providence in the most common things, let me select sleep—our nightly rest. "He giveth his beloved sleep," "Thou holdest mine eyes waking," so says the Bible; and events occasionally place that truth very vividly before us. Do you remember a terrible shipwreck which occurred not many years ago on our west coast, and how those who were saved out of a large number that perished, owed their life to one wakeful man? He was no watchman of the coast-guard, no pilot on the look-out for homeward-bound ships, but only an old, infirm seaman, who had gone to bed with the rest of the world. He had courted sleep that night; but, for no reason that he could fancy, his eyes were kept waking. Weary of turning and tossing on a sleepless bed, he rose and walked the floor. With an old sailor's love of the sea, he drew aside the curtain of his cottage window to gaze out on the heaving deep. And while the sight of it was waking up the memory of former years, his eye, ere a landsman could have descried it, caught an object coming shoreward through the gloom. Horror seizes him. It is an ill-fated ship rushing, like a reckless soul bent on destruction, through the fog on that iron coast, right into the jaws of death. Many were hurried that night into a watery grave. Yet, but for the circumstance that sleep had fled the old man's couch, but for the alarm he gave, but for the boats that were launched to the rescue, many more had been drowned, and some, perhaps, damned, who, converted to God, are now living to his glory on earth, or, beyond the reach of all storms, safely housed in heaven. God held his eyes waking; he had work for that ancient mariner to do.

But, to take an example on a scale involving world-wide interests, I can show that not the life of individuals only, but the existence of a nation, and, since the Saviour sprang from that nation, the salvation of the world, once turned on a sleepless night. Strange, yet true! The king of Persia—like many other kings, a mere puppet in the hands of unprincipled ministers—has signed a decree to exterminate the whole Jewish race. Conscience, uneasy for the deed, does not keep him awake when he retires to rest in Shushan's palace. Her hand has planted no thorns in the royal couch, yet he cannot sleep; nor is there balmy virtue in silence, or wine, or music, to make his weary eyelids drop. It is strange that he cannot sleep; and yet more strange his choice of something to relieve the tediousness of night. He calls for the chronicles of his kingdom. Dry reading, one would think; yet you know the issue, and how the page turning up that related the story of Mordecai's forgotten service, these wakeful hours led on to the honor of the Jew, the hanging of Haman, and the preservation of the race from which our Saviour descended. Was there no providence in that? Was it accident or blind chance which kept slumbers that night from the downy pillow? Accident, that instead of music, the revel, the dance, the soft arms of pleasure, led a voluptuary to seek entertainment in the musty records of his kingdom? Accident, that opened the book where it recorded the story of Hebrew loyalty? No. I believe that God's own finger turned these leaves, and held the king's eyes waking. He had work for that king to do.

These events draw aside the veil. We see all the reins that guide and govern the world gathered into the hands of God. We see Jesus standing by the helm of affairs; that there is no such thing as chance; that his care of his people extends to the most common, minute, and apparently trivial matters; how even waking hours, or dreamless slumbers are links in the golden chain of providence. A happy belief, too precious to be parted with! Let the thought that Jesus watches over your fortunes, and guards your welfare, and guides your way, banish every care. I do not say that you will never be disappointed, but certainly you ought never to be discontented. Many things in your circumstances may occasion anxious thought, but nothing should occasion or can excuse repining. Child of God! he has numbered the hairs of thy head, as well as the stars of heaven. Charge of angels! they shall keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

By him all things consist; and on raising our eyes to Jesus exalted, crowned, enthroned, with the government on his shoulder, two thoughts suggest themselves. First, our mind reverts, by way of contrast, to Jerusalem, to Calvary, to the doleful day when he sank beneath the weight, and expired amid the agonies of his cross. If he, who now bears the weight of worlds, once staggered under the burden of our sins, oh! what an incalculable, mysterious load of guilt must there be in sin! It bent the back that bears with ease the burden of ten thousand worlds. That load you cannot bear; and if you would not have it sink your souls into the deepest hell, flee to Calvary, leave it at the Cross. Cast sins and sorrow, cast both on him who invites the burden, saying, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Again, beholding Christ thus exalted to the right hand of God, we think of the security of his people. They are to watch and pray, and rejoice with trembling. Yet they cannot sink whom he holds up, nor lose the battle on whose side he fights. Believer, what art thou doing, going groaning through the world beneath a load of fears and cares? What should discourage thee? What should disturb thy peace? What ruffle the calm spirit of a man who knows that the hands once nailed for him to the tree now hold the helm of his fortunes; and that the blessed Saviour, who by love's golden sceptre reigns within his heart, holds sovereign sway over earth and heaven; and by both bitter and sweet providences, by coffins and cradles, by disappointments and joys, by losses and gains, shall make all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

The Head.

He is the head of the body, the Church.—COLOSSIANS i. 18.

AT a celebrated battle there was one position from which the enemy, after suffering defeat in every other part of the field, kept up an unabated fire. There, a huge twenty-four pounder vomited forth galling and continuous discharges; nor could our artillery, nor musketry, nor riflemen, silence it. "That gun," said the commanding officer, addressing the men of two regiments in a few brief, brave words, "must be taken by the bayonet. I must have it;" adding, as he placed himself at their head, "No firing, and recollect that I am with you." There needed no more. They advanced, the grape from the battery crashing through their ranks. They fired four rolling volleys before they charged; but when they did charge, the onset was irresistible.

The importance of a military position may be always estimated by the determination with which it is on the one hand assailed, and on the other hand defended. By this test I have been able to discover the key of an old battle-field. Who fought there, and in what cause they fell, are matters about which history is altogether silent; and even the lingering traditions of the glen are dim and vague, like objects seen through its gray creeping mists. Yet the hoary *cairns* that are scattered on rolling moor and rugged hill-sides tell how war once raged over that abode of peace; and how, where the moorcock crows to the morning, and the shy plover rings out her wail, and lambs chase each other, or playfully engage in mimic fight around these old gray stones, men once had trampled down the heather, staining it of a deeper crimson with their blood. And there, where the rude monuments of the dead stand crowded together for want of room, we know that the opposing tides of battle with direst shock, and human passions spent their wildest fury. These marks of hardest fighting and greatest carnage still point out the key of the position—the most important post that they had to hold or win in that old field of battle.

According to this rule, we should conclude that the church of Christ has regarded the headship of her Lord as in some respects the very key of her position. She has maintained it as not the least important of the doctrines which she has been charged to hold against all men—holding them to the death. For the sake of this doctrine, for Christ's crown, for his sole right to rule his own house, and to regulate, without Cæsar's interference, the affairs of his church, her largest, costliest, and most painful sacrifices have been made. And as if there was an instinct of grace corresponding to that remarkable instinct of nature which teaches even an infant, in the act of falling, to throw out its hands and arms, and save the head at the expense of its members, with a fidelity that has done her honor, the church has sacrificed her members, and lavishly shed her blood in support of Christ's headship. For this cause, counting all things but loss, many have suffered the spoiling of their goods; many have gone into banishment and exile; many have ascended the scaffold to lay down their heads on the block, or, embracing the stake with a lover's ardor, have gone to heaven in a chariot of fire, to wear the crown of martyrdom, and learn how well Christ keeps the promise, Them that honor me I will honor.

The apostles Peter and John were the first publicly to maintain this doctrine. At their parting, our Lord commanded his disciples to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; and when the Jewish rulers, attempting to infringe on Christian liberty, commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus, how prompt and how decisive was their reply! It leaves Christian men in corresponding circumstances in no doubt as to the path of duty, whether they have courage to take it or not. Hear their memorable words: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Nor less clear and decisive this reply of Peter's, on being charged a few days afterwards with having preached contrary to the injunctions of the civil magistrate, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Thus plainly did these men assert and boldly maintain the doctrine that Christ is head of his body, the church. They would have held it treason to own any other authority. So ought we.

It becomes not man to be proud of anything. We have defects enough to clothe us with humility. And a sense of many sins and many shortcomings will teach us, for any grace or honor we may possess, to ascribe glory to him who maketh one to differ from another, and out of the mouth of babes ordaineth strength. Yet, as patriots, we may be permitted to dwell with gratification and gratitude on the fact, that since the day when the apostles so boldly asserted Christ's sole right to reign in his church, and to regulate all matters of doctrine and discipline, government and duty therein, few countries have been more honored to testify and to suffer for that truth than has our own. I do not refer only to recent events, nor to the long and bloody struggles of the seventeenth century, nor to the part she played at the glorious Reformation. Her practical testimony to this doctrine dates from a much earlier period. Rude in arts and rough in manners as our forefathers might be, they were the last of the nations to bow the neck to the yoke of Popery. Popish, like Pagan Rome, found our countrymen hard to conquer. And thus, when the lights of Iona were extinguished, and nothing was left of a faith comparatively pure but the lonely cells and ruined sanctuaries of Culdee worship, the dreary period of Popish darkness was shorter here than elsewhere—just as is the duration of night on those rugged storm-beaten heights, which catch the morning sun before it has risen on the valleys, and stand up glowing in golden light when the shades of evening have wrapped these in deepening dusky gloom.

And after the era of the Reformation, who does not know, who has not read, now with weeping eyes, and now with burning indignation, what our good forefathers suffered for Christ's crown? It was dearer to them than their liberties or lives. Handed down, like an heirloom, from martyred sire to son, this cause is interwoven with our nation's history, and runs through it like a silver thread. It runs, I may say, in our very blood. We have imbibed it with our mother's milk. Far away from the smoke and din of cities, it is associated with many a wild weeping glen, the dark moss hag, and those misty mountains where our fathers were hunted down like partridges. There the moss-gray stone which still bears the rude outlines of a Bible and a sword, is regarded with veneration by a pious peasantry; for it shows that here a true man fell, and a martyr for Christ's kingly crown sleeps in his lonely grave, waiting the resurrection of the just. How much of its undying interest does our city owe to the localities with which this cause is associated! There, rose the gallows, on which the best and worthiest of the land were hung like caitiffs; and yonder, half-way between that castle and the palace, stood the gate above which their heads sat in ghastly rows, bleaching in the wind, and rain, and sun. In the neighborhood of this very church we seem to tread on sacred ground. This winding street, these low-browed windows, these old quaint tenements that see us quietly gathering for Sabbath worship, were crowded two hundred years ago with the spectators of a different, I might say a holier, certainly a more stirring scene. "They come!" runs through the anxious crowd, and fixes every wandering eye on the advancing procession. And there, with slow but firm step, comes hoar old age, and there, noble manhood, and there, most wept for by mothers and maidens, fair gentle youth—a band of candidates for martyrdom, witnesses for Christ's kingly rights, heroes who esteemed it noble for such a cause to die. In truth, our fathers set a higher value on Christ's headship than they set upon their own heads; and for that cause alone not less than eighteen thousand were faithful unto death during the long, and bloody, but glorious years of persecution. They have gone to their reward. Called, in some form or other, to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, may we follow them, even as they followed Christ! He has said, "Whosoever loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whosoever loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it.

A few years ago, as the world knows, we felt ourselves called on to revive our fathers' testimony, and shake the dust of two centuries from their time-worn banner. We had a cross to take up. Without knowing its weight, we took it up. And, while it becomes us to confess with sorrow before God and man, that human passions mingled "strange fire" with our service, and that fighting sometimes for victory as much as for truth, dross adulterated the gold of our offering, we thought then, and think still, that ours was a call of duty, and a righteous cause. We were martyrs neither by desire nor by mistake. But, as I have no wish to lay open old wounds, and would only dwell on those views of this doctrine which may edify the whole church and promote mutual love, I will only say further, that I hope, and trust, and pray, that the more the churches are called to suffer for Christ's headship, they will hold it the more resolutely. Never fear. There are other things beside the sturdy oak which the roaring tempest nurses into strength. The storms that strip the tree of some leaves, perhaps of some rotten branches, but moor it deeper in the rifts of the everlasting rock. Christ's words cannot fail, On this rock have I built my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

In now entering on the subject-matter of my text, I remark—

I. That Christ's body is his church.

One to examine, but not to dissect, while all other bodies shall die, this is deathless. "Because I live," says our Lord, "ye shall live also." Paradox as it sounds, this body is ever changing, yet unchangeable: different and the same; an undying whole formed of dying parts. Strange! yet not more strange than many things in nature. You are not the same person, for example, who, worshipped here twelve months ago. In name, in form, in features the same, in substance you are entirely different. Like Michael and Satan, who contended for the body of Moses, life and death have been contending for yours; death attacking, life defending; so that, the former constantly repairing what the latter is constantly destroying, the corporeal forms which we animate and inhabit, are undergoing such rapid as well as perpetual change, that a period much shorter than seven years renews our whole system. Life is just a long siege; and, though death triumph in the end, looking at the many years over which the struggle is protracted, surely we are fearfully and wonderfully preserved as well as made. But take another, and more familiar illustration. Look at a river. The exile returns to the haunts of his early years, and there, emblem of the peace of God, the river flows as it flowed when his life was young. Tumbling in snowy foam over the same rock, winding its snake-like way through the same verdant meadows, washing the feet of the same everlasting hills, it rushes through the glen with the impetuous passions of a perpetual youth, to pursue its course onward to the ocean that lies gleaming like a silver rim around the land. A gray old man, he seats himself on the bank where wild roses still shed their blossoms on a bed of thyme, and the crystal pool at his feet, these waters foaming round the old gray stone, that bright dancing stream, as they recall many touching memories of happy childhood and companions dead or gone, seem the same. Yet they are not. The liquid atoms, the component parts of the river, have been undergoing perpetual change. Even so it is with the church of Christ. The stream of time bears on to eternity, and the stream of grace bears on to glory, successive generations, while the church herself, like a river fed by perennial fountains, remains—unchangeable in Christ's immutability, in his immortality immortal.

These figures, however, fail in one important point. That river is one. The body is one. Unfortunately, the churches are many, split into such numerous, and, in not a few instances, such senseless divisions, that I know nothing better fitted to make a man recoil from the spirit of sectarianism than to see, drawn out to its full length, the long, wondrous, weary roll of the various sects that exist in Christendom. Fancy all these urging their claims on a newly-converted heathen! What a Babel of tongues! With what perplexity might he ask, amid so many contending factions, Which is the true church and body of Christ? Let us see.

Seven sons of Jesse are summoned into Samuel's presence. Goodly men, they stand before him, candidates for the crown of Israel. But they cannot all be kings; and which of them is to be the Lord's anointed? One after another, all the seven are rejected. Amazed at the result, the prophet turns to their father, saying, "Are here all thy children?" and on being told, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep," he says, "Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down till he come hither." A messenger goes. By-and-by, feet are heard at the door; it opens; and, little dreaming of the honors that await him, David, who had left his harp, and pipe, and playful lambs, on the hills of Bethlehem, enters—modesty, and manliness, and beauty in that countenance which was "goodly to look to." While the old man eyes the lad, as he stands reverently before him, a voice not caught by Jesse's ear, but heard by Samuel's, says, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

Now, suppose that the different churches, like these sons of Jesse, stood before us. Whatever may be made of their claims, each cannot be Christ's true body. He has but one church; for the second Adam, like the first, is the husband of one wife. And just as the church cannot have two heads, neither can the head have two bodies; for, as that body were a monster which had more heads than one, not less monstrous were that form where one head was united to two separate bodies. Of all these churches, then, each claiming to be cast in the true gospel mould—that with consecrated bishops, this with simple presbyters, this other without either; that administering baptism to infants as well as adults, this only to adults; that robed in a ritual of many forms, this thinking that religion, like beauty, when unadorned, is adorned the most—which is Christ's body, the Lamb's wife? Which are we to receive as the favorite of heaven? Of which does God say, as he said of David among rival brethren, Arise, anoint her, for this is she? Of none of them. Christ has a church, but it is none of these. In explanation of a remark which may surprise some, and is fitted to teach all of us humility and charity, I observe—

II. That Christ's body, which is not identical with any one church, is formed of all true believers, to whatever denomination they may belong.

It is natural for men to be partial to their own sect. Nor do I quarrel with the feeling, if, looking kindly on others, you are ready to extend the hand of fellowship to all that love the Lord Jesus Christ. Mothers are prone to think their own children lovelier than their neighbors'; and nothing is more natural than that we should say of our own denomination, Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. That is no breach of Christian charity. But to foster a spirit of sectarianism, and thus sin against Christ's spirit, is an offence as great as to sin against his truth. In some respects, indeed, I think bigotry is worse than heresy; and more hateful in God's sight than error, is the haughty churchism or exclusive self-righteous pride which say to others, "Stand by thyself; come not near me; for I am holier than thou."

"The king's daughter is all glorious within;" but where on earth is the church which will stand that test? Where is the church that, among other points of resemblance to the ark, has not the unclean as well as clean within its walls, raven and dove, leopard and kid, the cruel lion with the gentle lamb? Are not events ever and anon occurring to remind us of the two birds Noah sent forth on a voyage of discovery? Like this snow-white dove on weary wing returning to the ark, there are souls that can find no rest in sin or in the world, or anywhere away from God; happy souls! but, alas, there are others, also tenants of the ark, like yonder foul raven, that croaks and flaps his wings above corruption, and riots on the carcasses of the dead. Such characters as the last are found in the purest churches; spots on the sun, dead flies among the ointment. Surely it behoves us to see that we are not of their number. For, oh! these are sad and solemn words, Many are called, but few are chosen. And, happier than Christ, happier than Paul, that pastor must have a small and select flock whose members cost him no anxiety, neither fears nor the tears of him who said, Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

By these remarks I would not disparage outward ordinances and forms. They are valuable in their own place and for their own purposes; frames, as they are, to set the picture in; caskets for truth's jewels; dead poles, no doubt, yet useful to support living plants, and very beautiful when the bare stem is festooned with green leaves, and crowned with a head of flowers. The church of Christ, however, is not to be identified with this or that other form either of government or worship. She embraces the good of all denominations, and rejects the bad, from whatever hands they have received the rite of baptism, to whatever communion they may belong, however pure their creed, or scriptural their form of worship. "The just shall live by faith," by nothing else. He belongs therefore to the true church who believes; and he who believes not, to whatever church he may belong, has "neither part nor lot in this matter." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God help us to lay that truth to heart, and to embrace the Saviour as he is offered in the gospel!

I have seldom heard this catholic and happy doctrine more pointedly expressed than by a poor woman who dwelt in one of the darkest and most wretched quarters of our city. Away from her native home, and without one earthly friend, she had floated here, a stranger in a strange land, to sink into the most abject poverty; her condition but one degree better than our Saviour's. In common with the fox, she had a hole to lay her head in. Yet, although poor and outwardly wretched, she was a child of God, one of the jewels which, if sought for, we should sometimes find in dust-heaps. With a bashfulness not unnatural, she had shrunk from exposing her poverty to the stare of well-robed congregations, resorting on Sabbath days to the well—appropriate place—where a pious man was wont to preach to ragged outcasts, crying in the name of Jesus, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. Supposing, in my ignorance of this, that she was living, like the mass around her, in careless neglect of her soul, I began to warn her. Nor shall I soon forget how she interrupted me, and, drawing herself up with an air of humble dignity, and half offended, said, Sir, I worship at the well; and am sure that if we are true believers in Jesus, and love him, and try to follow him, we shall never be asked at the judgment day, Where did you worship? Well said, and well shot, thou poor one; that arrow hits the mark! And as I hold no other creed, nor admit anything to be of vital importance but genuine heaven-born faith, let me ask, Are you true believers? Blessed are you! Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! Are you unbelievers, impenitent, ungodly? You may by profession belong to a church which holds the head, and holds truth, and has, in God's providence, been honored to testify and suffer for it; but what of that? There is no safety in that. On the contrary, you appear only the more offensive to a holy God. A spot looks worse on the face of beauty; Satan looked most hateful when he stood among the sons of God; and, as I have observed at funerals in the winter time, skulls never look so grim, nor the churchyard mould so black, as when they have been flung on a bank of snow. Trust not in your church, nor say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." Judgment shall begin at the house of God.

III. Christ's body, in a sense, embraces all those churches which hold the essential truths of the gospel.

It was the misfortune of Europe that Charles V. did not learn at an early period of his life the lesson which he was afterwards taught in a Spanish cloister. It had saved him much treasure, the world much bloodshed, and his soul much sin. After vainly attempting to quench the light of the Reformation, and make all men think alike, this great monarch, resigning his crown, retired to a monastery. Wearied, perhaps, with the dull round of mechanical devotions, he betook himself, in the mechanical arts, to something more congenial to his active mind. After long and repeated efforts, he found that he could not make two time-pieces go alike, two machines, that had neither mind nor will, move in perfect harmony. Whereupon, it is said, he uttered this memorable reflection, What a fool was I to attempt to make all men think alike! Unfortunately for the peace of the church and for the interests of Christian charity, Charles the king has had more followers than Charles the philosopher.

There is a broad line of distinction between the essentials and the circumstantials of the faith. Yet what violent, what unnatural attempts at uniformity have men made, as if uniformity were a law of God! It is on no such model that he has constructed our world. God, while he preserves unity, delights in variety. A dull, dreary, uninteresting uniformity, is quite foreign to nature. Look at the trees of the forest! all presenting the same grand features, what variety in their forms! Some, standing erect, wear a proud and lofty air; some, modest-like, grow lowly and seek the shade; some, like grief, hang the head and have weeping branches; some, like aspiring and unscrupulous ambition, climb up by means of others, killing what they climb by; while some, rising straight and tall, with branches all pointing upwards, present in their tapering forms emblems of the piety that spurns the ground and seeks the skies. Or look at the flowers, what variety of gay colors in a meadow! Or look at mankind, what variety of expression in human faces, of tones in human voices! There are no two faces alike, no two flowers alike, no two leaves alike, I believe no two grains of sand alike. In that variety God manifests his exhaustless resources, and Nature possesses one of her most attractive charms. And why insist on all men observing a uniform style of worship, or thinking alike on matters that are not essential to salvation? You might as well insist on all men wearing the same expression of face, or speaking in the same tone of voice; for I believe that there are as great natural and constitutional differences in the minds as in the bodies of men.

How tolerant was Paul of differences! Forgetting how he bore even with errors which would now-a-days call down prompt excommunication on their authors, men, insisting on uniformity in the mere circumstantials of religion, have rent the church and sown the seeds of discord far and wide. Praying all the while for the peace of Jerusalem, they have made the church of Christ present such a melancholy spectacle as Jerusalem itself exhibited when, the Roman without and famine within, different factions raged in the city, and the Jews, fired by ferocious passions, plunged their swords into each other's bosoms.

His church has not followed her Lord's example. They were thieves and murderers whom Christ cleared out of the temple. But, struck with frenzy, aiming at an impossible uniformity, his followers have driven their brethren out, while Religion has stood by, wringing her hands, like Rachel weeping for her children, because they were not. No man, says the Bible, hateth his own flesh. What sane man consents to part with an arm or limb unless it be dead or incurably diseased? But churches, possessed, if not of a devil, yet of the greatest folly, have cut off their living members for no other offence than some small differences, some petty trifling sore, which the progress of time or the balm of kindness would have healed. I do not deny that there have been justifiable separations. There must needs be offences; and it does not follow that the woe pronounced on those by whom offences come falls on the party stigmatized as separatists. It is they who, creating wrongs or refusing redress, compel men of tender conscience to leave a church, that are guilty, if there be schism, of its sin.

Divisions are bad things. Do not fancy that I have any sympathy with those who, confounding charity with indifference, regard matters of religion as not worth disputing about. Such a state of death is still worse than war. Give me the roaring storm rather than the peace of the grave. Division is better than such union as the frost produces, when with its cold and icy fingers it binds up into one dead, congealed, heterogeneous mass, stones and straws, pearls and pebbles, gold and silver, iron and clay, substances that have nothing in common. Yet divisions are bad things. They give birth to bad passions. They cause Ephraim to envy Judah, and Judah to vex Ephraim. Therefore, what we ought to aim at, is to heal them, and where we cannot heal them, to soften their asperities. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called the children of God." If for conscience's sake Christian men must part, oh, that they would part, saying with Abraham, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, for we are brethren. Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." But it may not be the will of God that his church, in its collective character, should ever present, in this world, the characteristic feature of that beautiful tree. The palm has a peculiar port. It rises tall and graceful in one straight stem without a single branch, up to the leafy plumes that wave above the desert sands and form its graceful crown. The church, throwing out many goodly and fruitful boughs, may ever present apparent variety in actual unity—like that giant oak which, with its roots in the rock and its head in the skies, throws out many a branch to catch the blessed gifts of heaven in dews, and showers, and sunbeams. We hear much about the unity of the church. And how often has it been made to serve the interests of falsehood, how often has it been used as a spell, wherewith cunning priests have bound simple men to systems of gross error? Rightly understood, the unity of the church is by no means incompatible with the existence of different denominations. What are they but the branches of a tree which still is one; one in root, one in stem, one in sap, one in flower, and one in fruit. We have one faith, one spirit, and one baptism. We are united in Christ; we meet in that centre; and, like the radii of a circle, the nearer we approach our common centre, the nearer we draw to Christ, we shall be the nearer to each other. Let us gladly recognise a common brotherhood, and love one another, even as Christ loved us. Members of the same family, travelers to the same home, called with the same holy calling, let us ever remember the words of Joseph to his brethren, See that ye fall not out by the way.

But of all the forms of imagery under which Christ's church is set forth, I prefer that in my text. Bringing out as well as any other our relationship to Christ, and better than any other our relationship to each other, it teaches us the most blessed lessons of love, and charity, and tender sympathy. When bill-hook or pruning-knife lops a branch from the tree, the wounded stem bleeds, and seems for a while to drop some tears of sorrow, but they are soon dried up; the other boughs suffer no pain, show no sympathy, their leaves dance merrily in the wind over the poor dead branch that lies withering in their shade. But sympathy pervades the body and its members. Touch my finger roughly, and the whole body feels it; wound this foot, and the pang, thrilling through my frame, shoots upward to the head; let the heart, or the head, or even a tooth ache, and all the system suffers disorder. With what tenderness is a diseased member touched! What anxious efforts do we make to save a limb! With what slow reluctance have I seen a wasted patient, after months or even long years of suffering, consent to the last remedy, the surgeon's knife! What holy lessons of love, charity, sympathy, does Christ therefore teach us by the figure of my text! We have differences; but do these form any reason why we should not love each other, give and forgive, bear and forbear, suffer and sympathize, one with another; and agreeing to differ, walk together as far as we are agreed? Let us keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." These differences are like our dark, cold shadows, that, little at noon, grow larger as night approaches, assuming a gigantic size when the sun creeps along the horizon of a winter sky, or hangs low at his rise or setting. Sun of righteousness! rise higher and higher over us, till in thy light and love the church enjoys the full blaze of thy meridian beams, and these shadows all but vanish! For this blessed end, God of love, pour out thy Spirit more affluently on the churches! Then shall the brethren dwell together in unity, and the world say, as it said in the days of old, See how these Christians love one another!

The Head.

(CONTINUED.)

He is the head of the body, the Church.—COLOSSIANS i. 18.

GOD "is not the author of confusion." So in the beginning he established a harmony on earth as perfect as that of heaven. Nothing was out of tune, nor was there a jarring note in all creation. But how many and great discordances have the devil and sin introduced? Can any man, who looks abroad on the world, shut his eyes to the fact that much is out of order, that many things are out of joint, and that we do not always find, to use a common saying, the right man in the right place? Sceptres fall from the strong grasp of great men into feeble hands. The sweat of labor stands on begrimed and dusty brows that are fitted to wear a coronet or a crown. He ploughs the rugged soil, who has a hand to guide the helm of church or state. Men sit in the pews, that have piety and talents to adorn the pulpit. Money flows in on those who, unlike the lake that gives as it gets, have no generous outgoings that correspond to their income; like water in foul stagnation, or wasted on a bed of sand, what is lost to others is no true gain to them. Poverty, on the other hand, though not the curse, is the cross of many a liberal soul. Many people in the world have the power to bless others, but are eaten up by their own wretched selfishness; while others have the will to do good, but lack the power. So many things are discordant, so different from what they should be, and but for sin had been, that religion only can reconcile a man to the world, and enable him, from circumstances which embitter and exasperate the spirit of the ungodly, to draw lessons of faith and patience. Yielding neither to envy nor to covetousness, a good man bows to the will of Providence. Using no violence to set wrong things right, he waits the advent of a better world, having "learned, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content."

Among other anomalies, we see that the moral and physical properties of men are often out of keeping. I have found a kind, gentle, and most loving heart under a rough exterior, reminding me of the milk and meat stored up within the cocoa-nut's dry, hard, husky shell. On the other hand, look at Absalom! What winning manners, what grace and beauty, how much of all that in form and features pleases the eye and ministers to the pride of life, are united in that man to the greatest moral baseness! as if God would show us in how little esteem he holds what he threw away on so bad a man; as if he intended to rebuke the silly vanity which worships at a mirror, and feeds on charms that shall feed the worms of the grave. Nor is his the only case where a fair form has lodged a foul heart, and crimes of treachery and murder have stained the hands of beauty.

Again, we often see that the mental does not correspond with the corporeal development. The finest genius has not seldom been enshrined in a poor crazy casket; or in a coarse one, like a pearl within its rough sea-shell. Little men have done mighty things. The boldest daring has been united with a puny presence; and how did that great emperor, who in our days aspired to be another Alexander, illustrate the poet's words—

> "The mighty soul how small a body holds."

On the other hand it was, at least in some respects, a weak head that stood on the broad shoulders of Samson! Whom the Philistines could not subdue, a woman conquered, binding with her charms one whom they could not bind with their chains. He fell before the influence that in Solomon's case made the wisest the most foolish of men. God says, In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird; yet see how Samson walks straight in, snared by a cunning transparent to all eyes but his own. Enslaved by animal passions, asleep in Delilah's traitorous lap, a fettered captive in the hands of the Philistines, there he lies, a great lion in the hunter's net; reminding us, by way of contrast, of the words, "Wisdom is better than strength; wisdom is better than weapons of war."

An example also of discordancy, but with mind towering aloft over matter, what a noble contrast does Paul present to Samson! There is nothing in the outward man to attract the gazer's eye. According to ancient tradition, he was a poor, mean-looking figure. His presence, said his enemies, is weak, and his speech contemptible. But put his parchments before him, put a pen in his hand, and, higher than the bird ever flew from whose wing it dropped, he soars away into a heaven of thought, or, coming down with an eagle's swoop, descends further than any man before or since into the deepest depths of gospel mysteries. Or, give him liberty of speech ; place him on Mars' Hill to expound his despised faith, or let him stand on his defence at the bar of kings, like a lion at bay. Indifference gives place to interest, contempt changes into admiration, the audience is hushed, and, amid breathless silence, he sways the multitude with a master's hand, his puny form seeming to rise to a giant's stature. He seizes error, and rends it as Samson rent the lion ; he lays these arms of his on the colossal pillars of Time's oldest superstitions, shakes the hoary fabric, and pulls it down into the dust, burying gods and goddesses in one common ruin.

The casket affords no test by which to estimate the value of the jewel. The boards and binding of a book suggest no idea of the brilliant thoughts that are scattered, like stars, over its pages. So, in this discordant state, you cannot judge the inner by the outer man, the head or the heart by the body which they rule and animate. That observation applies to the most sacred things. The church of Christ herself presents the greatest of anomalies. And it would do our Lord the greatest injustice, if, overlooking that fact, we were to judge the head by its body, and argue from what Christians are, what Christ himself must be.

Neither, in the first place, in our own, nor in any other existing church, do we see the real body of which Jesus Christ is the head. Its members consist of all true believers, and are dispersed over the wide lands of Christendom. Then, what are the best churches, at the best, but gold mines ? Some may be, some certainly are, richer than others in the precious metal, yet all have their dross and rubbish. Nor, to continue the figure, shall the true church become visible, appear as a distinct and separate body, till the gold, gathered from a hundred mines, and purified by a Spirit whose emblem is fire, and presenting to the divine Refiner a perfect image of himself, is run into a common mould. Besides, while the materials of this church are widely scattered, and much of the ore yet lies buried in the mine, none of them are pure; none perfect. Who can say that he has no sin? There is no man that sinneth not. Nor is there any, though he has come in contact with the finest specimens of piety, and has been happy enough to breathe the holiest atmosphere of Christian society, who is not ready with the wise man to say, I have seen an end of all perfection.

To change the figure, the materials of the heavenly temple are now under the hammer, and by hard strokes of fortune and rough providences, as well as by the ordinary means of grace, God is preparing these living stones to be removed by the hand of death, and set in a temple where no sound of hammer is heard. The church is in process of building. And no more than any other builder is Christ to be judged by his work, till he has brought his labors to a close. Then, when from the most excellent majesty, the voice once heard on the cross cries again, "It is finished," when he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it," when the scaffolding of present ordinances is removed, when the heavens which concealed it are rolled up like a curtain, how shall that temple, of such proportions and surpassing splendor, stand forth the admiration of the universe, its greatest wonder, and God's brightest glory! Then, to take up the metaphor of my text, the body will be worthy of the head, as the head is the glory of the body.

I. As Head of his church, our Lord Jesus Christ is the life of its members.

You do not need to be anatomists to know that, as the head is the highest, it is the noblest, most important part of our whole frame. Seat of the senses and shrine of the soul, it is more than any other part connected with life and its various functions. From this great source and centre of vital power the other organs draw all their energies. Paralyze those nerves which connect them with the brain, as the wires of the telegraph connect the different stations with the electric battery, and their powers are gone, instantly gone. Their functions cease; the eye has no sight; the ear no hearing; the lips no voice; the tongue tastes neither sweetness in honey nor bitterness in wormwood; the strong arm of labor hangs powerless by the side; nor is there power left to lift a foot, though the lifting of it were to save your life. The whole machinery of this wonderful frame stops, like that of a mill when you shift the sluices, and turn the water off its dashing wheel. Indeed so intimately connected are the head and the body, that one cannot exist without the other. In her freaks, no doubt, Nature does produce strange monsters, which, though deficient, some of this and some of that part, contrive to live; and it is marvelous to see what formidable lesions the body can suffer, of what valuable members it may be maimed, and yet survive. But the loss of the head is the loss of life. Death descends on the knife of the guillotine. A bullet whistles through the parting air, the lightning flashes, the sword of the headsman gleams in the sun, and—there is a corpse! before the eye has winked, the man is dead, stone dead.

In illustrating the doctrine and figure of my text, this leads me to remark—

1. As head of his church, Jesus Christ, by means of the connection which grace establishes between him and the believer, maintains our spiritual life. Without me, he says, ye can do nothing. As all our wishes, words, and works, however they may be expressed in looks, and sounds, and bodily movements, are born in the brain, there is not a good wish we ever formed, a good word we ever spoke, a good work we ever did, but Christ was its fountain-head. Separated from him, a believer were no better than an eye plucked from its socket, a cold, dead hand severed from the bleeding arm.

Suppose that, by some strange chance, this connection were dissolved, what a deadly paralysis would seize the soul! There are few sights more pitiful than to see a man of robust strength, of eloquent lips, of eagle eye, of majestic port, of stalwart step, by a stroke of paralysis suddenly turned into a poor, stammering, tottering, impotent object, whom the touch of a child can prostrate in the dust. Yet he is only a feeble image of what we should become were the gracious communications of the Holy Spirit suspended. Deprived of the strength I draw from Christ, I could not stand a buffet from Satan's hand. How should I be able to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, or fight the good fight of faith? However strong the hand of faith had been, it would now shake like an aspen leaf; and, now but the wreck of other days, gone were my power to sing the praises of God, gone my power to walk, or run in the way of his commandments. And this impotency, whether it spread over our souls like a creeping palsy, or came with the suddenness of a stroke, were but the dismal prelude to eternal death.

I have supposed, for illustration's sake, that the connection were dissolved, but, blessed be God! that cannot be. "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." With such an assurance from his lips, how may we say to Jesus, Thou hast set my feet upon a rock? Standing on its sunny summit, far above the surging waves of doubt and fear, what hinders us to exclaim with Paul, I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is through Jesus?

2. As head of his church, Jesus Christ is the source of our spiritual life. We must not confound the means of life with its first cause. The chamber in Shunam, where a pious woman had lodged the man of God, presents us with a fair and striking picture of what we may do in communicating the blessing of spiritual life to a soul dead in sins. Let us in fancy open the door, and, with feelings of awe and wonder, enter that room where Elisha, having left the mother below, has shut himself up with the cold, unconscious corpse. The dead boy is lying in the prophet's chamber, and on the prophet's bed; as if, like a drowning one who catches a passing straw, the poor woman had thought, when she laid him there, that there might be something not only sacred, but life-restoring, that clung to the walls

which had been hallowed by the good man's prayers. He gazes fixedly and fondly on the pale placid countenance; and having waked up his tenderest affections for the little dead creature he had often carried in his arms, and kissed, and blessed, Elisha turns from the lifeless clay to the living God. He kneels beside the dead. He prays for the dead. And in prayers a mother may hear, as, with beating heart, she sits silent, and listening, and hoping below, he pours out his very soul to God. The prayer ceases. It has been heard. The prophet knows it; and now rises to employ other means, nor doubts of their success. As one who, seeking another's conversion, brings the truth in himself into kindest, closest contact with that other's soul—soul to soul, and heart to heart, Elisha brings his own life as close to the dead as possible. Love revolting at nothing, he takes the corpse into his arms. He stretches himself upon the body; he puts his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands. The living heart of the prophet beats against the dead heart of the child, knocks there to waken it; he all the time pleading with God, entreating with tears that hang on the lashes of those closed eyes and bedew the pallid face of death. We know not how long the dead lay in the embraces of the living; but pains and prayer had their sure reward. A step is on the floor. The mother catches it. She starts. The door opens. "Gehazi," cries the prophet, a summons rapidly followed by the glad command, "Call the Shunammite." Hope sounds in that voice; joy leaps in her heart. She hastens up, she rushes in. He points her to the smiling boy, saying, Take up thy son, as with delirious joy and open arms she bounds across the floor to lock him in her embraces.

Thus, simply as a medium or link which connects the living with the dead, a believer may be the means of communicating life. But the life which Christ gave you was his own. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." What Elisha did not, and could not do in that chamber for the child, our Saviour did on the cross for us. He died that we might live. He poured out his soul unto death. To fill our veins with blood, he emptied his own. He stretched himself out upon the cold corpse of a world to communicate life, and, while communicating it, expired. He breathed life into the dead, but it was his own. If any vital heavenly fire burns in you, it was Christ who kindled it; for the spirit life came not, like the natural, through father and mother, flashing, as an electric spark, from the first man along the linked chain of successive generations. Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, that life came when Christ impressed his kiss of love on death's icy lips, just as that of Adam came from his Maker, when, stooping over the clay model of a man, God breathed into its nostrils the breath of life. And as, by his death, which was a satisfaction for sin, Jesus Christ purchased our life, by his life he now maintains it; so that, as the life of a pregnant mother is the life of the babe within her, his life is ours. Is the connection between these two so intimate, that she might address her unborn, saying, Because I live, thou livest also? Well, Jesus says more; he says, Because I live, ye *shall* live also. That mother may die. Hope has strewed her withered blossoms on a grave where the rose and the rose-bud lie buried together; and death, coffining the babe in a dead mother's womb, by one fell stroke has inflicted a double blow on some childless, widowed man. But, in their life one with Christ, believers can never die. Never: for he dieth no more. That head bows on a cross no more; that eye darkens in death no more; that brow, crowned with glory, bleeds under thorns no more. "I am he that liveth and was dead."

Thus, restored to life by Christ, and through your union with him safe from the second death, believers can dare, in a sense, to use his own great words, saying, "I am he that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore." So long as Christ lives, you live; so long as Christ shall live, you shall live. Since your life is hid with Christ in God, why then should you dread the grisly king? Fear not the shaking of his dart. You are deathless men. Hear the voice of your Saviour. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Disease may rot off a limb; an empty sleeve, pinned to a breast hung thick with stars, and crosses, and medals, may tell of losses suffered as well as battles fought in a country's cause; and accident may any day tear a member from our body, and separate it from its living head. But no accident, no chance, no, nor all the devils of hell, shall separate us from the love of Christ. I cling to that belief. Without it, where were the peace of the saints? Where the promise and care of him who says, I will never leave you, let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.

II. As Head of his church, Jesus Christ rules its members.

It is not pain that makes the insect go spinning round and round, to the entertainment of the thoughtless, not cruel, boy who has beheaded it. It has lost in the head that which preserves harmony among the members, and controls their movements, and prevents such anarchy in the body corporeal as there was in the body politic, when there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Seated, as becomes a king, in the highest place, the head gives law to all beneath it. The tongue speaks or is silent, the arms rise or fall, the feet walk or rest, the eye opens or shuts, as this sovereign wills; and, transmitting its orders along the nerves which, ramified through the body, reach the most distant members, it receives from all them instant, implicit obedience. It rules with more despotic authority than any other sovereign. Its subjects never mutiny; they hatch no plots; they form no conspiracies.

Patterns of the obedience which we should yield to Jesus Christ, the members hesitate not to obey the head, even to their own loss and painful suffering. Take the hand, for instance. Archbishop Cranmer stands chained to the stake. The fagots are lighted. With forked tongues the flames rise through the smoke that opens, as the wind blows it aside, to show that great old man standing up firm in the fiery trial. Like a true penitent, he resolves that the hand which had signed his base recantation shall burn first; and how bravely it abides the flame! In obedience to the head, the hand lays itself down to suffer amputation; in obedience to the head, it flings away the napkin, sign for the drop to fall; in obedience to the head, as was foreseen by some of our fathers when they attached their names to the League and Covenant, it firmly signed the bond that sealed their fate and doomed them to a martyr's grave. Let the head forgive, and the hand at once opens to grasp an enemy's, in pledge of quarrel buried and estrangement gone. Would to God that Jesus Christ had such authority over us! Make us, O Lord, thy willing subjects in the day of thy power! Ascend the throne of our hearts! Prince of Peace! take unto thee thy great power, and reign!

How happy, how holy should we be, were our hearts, our minds, our bodies, as obedient to the laws of his word and to the influences of his Spirit, as that hand and this tongue are to the head that rules them. Brethren, what else but this is needed, not only to preserve the purity and peace of our souls, but to restore purity and peace to distracted churches? My body knows and owns no authority whatever but its own head. Why should Christ's church do otherwise? How many divisions would be healed, would she repudiate all government but his in things belonging to his kingdom, would she take his word as her only rule, and read it with the docile faith of a child, would she call none master but Jesus, nor admit anything to bind her conscience but the law and the testimony, would she throw down all sectarian walls and barriers, and make nothing necessary to church communion but what is necessary to being a Christian.

There is no essential difference between the Evangelical denominations. And what should hinder them from being as ready to love and help one the other as my foot is to run in the service of my hand, and as my hand is to work in the service of my foot, and as my eyes and ears, standing on their tower of observation, are to watch for the good of the body and all its members? Were there sympathy like that among the brethren, how soon would there be harmony in Jerusalem! What triumphs would crown her arms! what prosperity would bless her palaces! The sin, the shame, the scandal, the monstrous, unnatural, afflicting spectacle of Christian churches, up in arms against each other, and stunning the ears of a wondering, scoffing world with the din of battle, would cease, for ever cease. Let the fields of war present the horrid spectacle of men shearing off each other's limbs, and plunging their swords into each other's breasts, but who ever heard of a case so monstrous, as a man's hands and feet and other members declaring war, one with another? Alas! such a sight the church of Christ has often presented. The most wretched reasons have been considered good enough for separating or remaining separate. Paltry differences have given rise to quarrels, and quarrels have given rise to blows, and blows have ended in running sores and bitter hatreds, and a bleeding, weeping church has been left, when asked about her wounds, to reply, "These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Oh, that all our unhappy, unholy contentions would cease! How long, O Lord, how long! Come, Holy Dove, and sweep the storms away with thy snow-white wing, bringing from heaven the branch of an olive plucked from the trees that grow by the river of life. Yet vain meanwhile the wish! Never shall the ark rest, nor sweet peace brood, like a halcyon bird, on the troubled waters, till Christ receives the honor which is his due; till the Head that is in heaven rules the body that is on earth; till the names of fathers, both ancient and modern, are discarded, and no authority but Christ's is acknowledged by a church which he has bought with his precious blood, and whose members, loved so dearly by him, ought so kindly and so dearly to love one another. "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

III. As Head of his church, Jesus Christ sympathises with its members.

According to Solomon, "all the rivers run into the sea," and were you to dissect the body you would find that all the nerves run into the brain. The head, is the centre of the nervous system. Beneath that palatial dome the soul dwells ; and by the nerves which run out from that centre she corresponds with matter, looking through the eyes, feeling by the hand, hearing by the ears, speaking by the tongue, and, unless when she seizes the hours of sleep to rest herself or to roam away in dreams, thus holding communion with the outer world. The nerves form a perfect system of living telegraphs. By means of them the soul knows in an instant what passes in all parts of her realm, and takes immediate measures for the well-being of every member of the body. Let the foot but touch a thorn, it is instantly withdrawn. And how ? Pain, thrilling along the nerves, flashes the danger upward to the head, which, by another set of nerves, flashes back an immediate order, so that before the thorn is buried in the flesh, the foot is withdrawn. If but the wing of a gnat brush, if but a mote of dust touch the guardian fringes, the eyelid drops, like the portcullis at yonder castle gate, to keep out the enemy. Thus the head sympathizes with all the body, and, sympathizing, succours it.

Such is the sympathy between Christ and his people. Let that comfort, strengthen, cheer you. He is in constant, ay, in closest communication with every one of his members ; and by means of lines that stretched along the starry sky pass from earth to heaven; the meanest cottage where a believer dwells is joined to the throne of God. No accident stops that telegraph. The lines of providence radiate out, and the lines of prayer radiate in. Touched with a fellow-feeling for your infirmities, Christ suffers all your wrongs, is sensible of your every want, and hears every prayer you utter. You can never apply to him too often; you cannot ask of him too much. To his ear the needy's prayers are sweeter music than the voice of angels, or the best strung harp in heaven.

In a distant land, how bitterly the poor invalid thinks of home! Oh! how he wishes he could annihilate the seas that roll between him and his mother, and remove his sick-bed, far from her kind attentions. A stranger in a strange land, the bitter tears rise the faster in his eye as busy fancy flies away, and the home of his boyhood stands before him, and the cool breeze wafting odours from the flowers kisses his cheek, and he passes under the shadow of the trees where he played a happy child, and, entering the well-known door, he hears his sister's song, and a father's merry laugh, and a mother's sweet, soft, loving voice, and sees those that would hasten to his help, and hang over his bed, and smooth his restless pillow, and wipe the death-sweat from his brow, gathered, a bright and happy circle, by a fireside he shall never more see.

It is sweet to feel that any one cares for us; sweetest in suffering's hour to have those near who love us, to see the glistening tear, and hear the kind tones of unwearying affection. But human sympathy, take it at the best, is liable to a thousand interruptions; and then we have sometimes sorrows that we hide from others, with which a bosom friend is not allowed to intermeddle. But, blessed Jesus! there is no sorrow thy people hide from thee, nor any pang thy members feel but it is felt by thee. Thanks be to God that, selecting from our frame its most sensitive and tender part, he has set this forth in an image which all can appreciate and understand. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

If, to words that so beautifully and fully set forth the tender sympathy which Christ, as their Head, cherishes for his beloved people, I could venture to add any that ever fell from mortal lips, I would select those of Margaret Wilson, Scotland's maiden martyr. Some two hundred years ago, there was a dark period of suffering in this land, when deeds of bloody cruelty were committed on God's people, not outdone by Indian butcheries. One day the tide is flowing in the Solway Firth, rushing, like a race-horse, with snowy mane to the shore. It is occupied by groups of weeping spectators. They keep their eyes fixed on two objects out upon the wet sands. There, two women, each tied fast by their arms and limbs to a stake, stand within the sea-mark; and many an earnest prayer is going up to heaven that Christ, who bends from his throne to the sight, would help them now in their dreadful hour of need. The elder of the two is staked farthest out. Margaret, the young martyr, stands bound, a fair sacrifice, near by the shore. Well, on the big billows come, hissing to their naked feet; on and further on they come, death riding on the top of the waves, and eyed by these tender women with unflinching courage. The waters rise and rise, till, amid a scream and cry of horror from the shore, the lessening form of her that had death first to face, is lost in the foam of the surging wave. It recedes, but only to return; and now, the sufferer gasping for breath, her death struggle is begun ; and now, for Margaret's trial and her noble answer. "What see you yonder ?" said their murderers, as, while the water rose cold on her own limbs, they pointed her attention to her fellow-confessor in the suffocating agonies of a protracted death. Response full of the boldest faith, and brightest hope, and all the divine, unfathomed consolation of my text to you, she firmly answered, "I see Christ suffering in one of his own members." Brave and glorious words! borrowed in that hour from the precious language of my text, and leading us to the apostle's most comforting and sublime conclusion, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

The Beginning.

Who is the beginning.—COLOSSIANS i. 18.

THERE are certain points where the different kingdoms of Nature meet, and are, indeed, interwoven into each other. Each in turn passes the boundary line into the other's domain, as the land and the sea do, here, in the headland that stands so boldly out among the boiling waves, there, in the beautiful bay that lies asleep, locked in the arms of the land.

In our conservatories, for instance, you may see flowers which present a strong, very curious, and surprising resemblance to some of the insect tribes. Leaves stand up above the body of the flower, in form, position, and brilliant colors, so like painted wings, that the flowers themselves appear to be gorgeous butterflies, suspended in the air, and hovering over the plant, just as you have often seen the insect on fluttering wing ere it alighted to drink the nectar from gold, or silver, or ruby cup. The animal world, too, is furnished with things as strange; presenting, if I may say so, a corresponding play and display of divine power. If there are flowers like insects, there are insects so like leaves, fresh and green, or sere and yellow, that the deception is complete; nor is the mistake discovered, till, on putting out your hand to pluck the leaf, you stand amazed to see it in an instant, as by magic, change into a living creature, and, taking wing, fly off. These objects are more than curious. A thoughtful eye sees there not only the skill and power, but the goodness of him, who, in that strange livery, so masks a helpless creature, that its enemies are deceived, and it is protected from their attacks. When we see such exquisite devices and almighty power put forth to shield the meanest insect, what force does it give to our Lord's exhortation, Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

But the kingdoms of nature touch at points still more real and palpable. They are so shaded off into each other, that some of the animals which occupy their borders present a combination of properties puzzling even to philosophers, and an inexplicable wonder to the ignorant multitude. The power of flying belongs to birds, and the power of walking to quadrupeds; yet there are birds that never fly, and four-footed animals that never walk. It is the characteristic of land animals to breathe by lungs, and of fishes to breathe by gills; yet there are inhabitants of the sea which breathe like creatures of the shore, and, on the other hand, in dry and dusty walls, and beneath the stones of the moorland, there are creatures whose breathing organs are the same as those of fishes. Sensibility characterizes animals, insensibility plants; but there are plants with leaves so sensitive that they shrink from the slightest touch—shutting like an eye-lid, if they be rudely blown upon; while, on the other hand, there are animals which you may turn inside out, like the finger of a glove, and the rudeness seems to give them no pain, and certainly neither destroys their life, nor deranges their functions. Deprived of light, plants pale and sicken, droop and die; and so dependent is animal life on a due supply of light, that Dr. Kane imputes the madness that seized his dogs to the darkness of that polar night which lasted for a hundred and forty days. Yet, so independent are some creatures of the blessed light, that in those vast caverns of the New World which the boldest travelers have not ventured fully to explore, amid a gloom deep as the grave, and on the banks of a river which, rushing through them, fills the ear with the roar of its cataract, and goes, like a being whose fate is lost in mystery, no man knows where, strange eyeless animals roam, and have their loves, and, not overlooked by God down there, enjoy a life that, faint emblem of the condition of the lost, is passed in utter and perpetual darkness. How marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty!

In consequence of certain plants and animals being endowed with properties that characterize the classes next in order to themselves, there is a beautiful gradation in nature. There is no great wide gap, no abrupt and sudden change. The whole fabric of creation appears rising upwards, like a lofty pyramid, with its different courses dovetailed the one into the other; and so constructed, that by a series of steps you rise from the lowest forms of existence up to man, standing upon its apex, with his feet resting on earth, and his head, so to speak, touching the stars. And what combinations are so strange as those which meet in man? In some respects how noble, in others how mean he is; in his corporeal elements an animal, in his spiritual essence an angel; often the slave of passions that grovel in the dust, yet endowed with powers that hold converse with God; before the fall half an angel and half an animal, but now, exiled from Eden, his life a mystery, and himself, as an old writer says, half a devil and half a beast—a strange being at the best, symbolized, after a sort, by those cherubim which, to the countenance of a man and the wings of an angel, joined the form of a beast.

Great is the mystery of godliness! The most precious mysteries is the greatest of all mysteries. Neither in man, nor in angel, nor in any other creature, is there such a combination of what appear irreconcileable properties, such harmonizing of what seems discordant, such blending and bringing together of the peculiar characteristics of distinct and different orders, as in "the mystery of godliness." In his person, and character, and work, our Lord Jesus Christ presents what is explicable, and, to my mind, credible, on no theory but one, that he was God manifest in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us. Indeed, I should find it, I think, an easier thing to deny the divinity of the Bible, than, having admitted that, to reject the divinity of our Lord. To illustrate this extraordinary conjunction of apparently conflicting elements found in him.

1. Look at our Lord by the grave of Lazarus. How truly man, partaker of our common nature! The sight of the tomb wakens all his grief; the sufferings of these two sisters, clinging to each other, touch his loving heart; and there he stands, for ever sanctioning sorrow, and even exalting it into a manly, most noble thing. His eyes swim in tears, groans rend his bosom; he is so deeply, so uncontrollably, so visibly affected, that the spectators say, See how he loved him! Jesus wept. So it was some moments ago. But now, what a change! The crowd retreat, surprise, wonder, terror seated on every face; the

boldest recoiling from that awful form which comes shuffling out of the grave. This man of tears, so gentle, so tender, so easily moved that he often wept, endued with a sensibility so delicate that the strings of his heart vibrated to the slightest touch, has, by a word, rent the tomb. Struck with terror, the witch of Endor shrieked when she saw the form of Samuel emerging from the ground; what a contrast this scene to that! Not in the least surprised at the event, as if, in raising the buried dead, he had done nothing more remarkable than light a lamp or rekindle the embers of an extinguished fire, calm and tranquil, Jesus points to Lazarus, saying, Loose him, and let him go.

2. Look at Jesus by Jacob's well. There a woman who has come to draw water about mid-day, finds a traveler seated. She looks at him. He is brown with the dust of a journey; he looks pale, and worn, and weary; the hot sun beats upon his head. He accosts her, saying, Give me to drink! And in granting it—for woman seldom refuses kindness to the needy—she fancies, no doubt, that this is some poor Jew, whose haughty pride bends to necessity in asking the meanest favor from a Samaritan. So he seemed, when, gratefully acknowledging her kindness, he bent his head, and drank deep draughts of the cool refreshing water. But, when he has raised his eyes to look, not into her face, but into her heart, and to read off, as from a book, its most secret thoughts, and, although they had never met before, to tell her all, to use her own words, that she had ever done, with what wonder does she regard him? She is amazed and awed. Well she might. The thirsty way-worn man has suddenly changed into the omniscient God.

Thus, the incommunicable attributes of Divinity, and the common properties of humanity stand out equally clear in our Lord's life and person. And just such a conjunction of things apparently irreconcileable presents itself to our attention in the description given of Jesus Christ in this verse. In this clause, he is described by a term sacred to God; we pass on to the next, and step at once from the throne of the heavens down into a grave. In these words, "the beginning," we behold him presiding at the creation of the universe; by those which follow, "the first-born from the dead," we are carried in fancy to a lonely garden, where, all quiet within, Roman sentinels keep watch by a tomb, or where, as they fly in pale terror from the scene, we see him who had filled the eternal throne, and been clothed with light as with a garment, putting off a shroud, and leaving a tomb. What key is there to this mystery, what possible way of harmonizing these things, but this, that Christ, while man, was more than man, one who has brought together properties so wide apart as dust and divinity, time and eternity, eternal Godhead and mortal manhood? What comfort to us, as well as glory to him, in this combination! Should it not dissipate every care and fear, to think that our Saviour, friend, and lover, has the heart of a brother and the hand of God?

Let us now consider that clause of this verse in which our Lord is called "the beginning."

I. This term expresses his divine nature.

I have read a story of a blind man, who, determined to rise above his misfortune, and to pursue knowledge under the greatest difficulties, set himself to study the nature of light and colours. This much he had learned, that, while these differ in intensity, it is the red-coloured ray that glares strongest on the eye. He flattered himself that he had at length mastered a subject which must remain forever more or less of a mystery to one, as he was, born blind; and so, when asked what he thought red was like, he replied—evident satisfaction at his acquirements lighting up his sightless face—that he fancied it like the sound of a trumpet. Though we may smile at an answer so wide of the mark, his difficulty in describing colours is more or less ours in describing God. It were easier for these fingers to close upon the world, for this hand to hold the great globe within its grasp, than for any finite mind to comprehend the infinite fulness of God. "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are part of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power, who can understand?"

Just as that blind man borrowed terms from sounds to express the objects of sight, and therefore did it very imperfectly, even so, familiar only with what is visible, palpable, finite, we have to borrow terms from these things to describe the invisible, the God who is encased in no body, and confined within no bounds. And as I have seen a father, to make a thing plain to his little child, take the boy on his knee, and, forgetting his own learning, dropping all correct and philosophical language, speak to the child after the manner of a child, so our heavenly Father condescends to speak of himself to us. Did he make the heavens and the earth? They are the work of his hands. Does he rule the storm? He holds the winds in his fist. Are those tremendous powers of nature, the earthquake and the volcano, obedient to his will? Like conscious guilt in presence of her judge, the earth trembles at his look, and at his touch the mountains smoke. Does he constantly watch over his people? As a kind mother's eye, whatever be her task, follows the movements of her infant, so that if it fall she may raise it, or if it wander too near the fire, the cliff, or the brink of a stream, she may run to pluck it out of danger, God's eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong to them whose hearts are perfect towards him. Does it thunder? It is the voice of the Lord; the lightning cloud that comes driving up the sky is his chariot, and when flash blazes upon flash, his arrows go abroad. His presence is now an eye, now a hand, now an arm, and now a shield. His love is a kiss, his anger is a frown. Are his mercies withdrawn? He repents. Are they restored? He returns. Does he interpose in any remarkable way? He plucks his hand from his bosom, and, like one who goes vigorously to work, the blacksmith who wields the hammer, or the woodman who plies the axe, he makes bare his arm. And when inspiration, attempting one of her loftiest flights, seeks to express the greatness of his majesty, she turns the heavens into a sapphire throne, spangled all with stars, and taking up this great globe rolls it forward for God to set his feet on. "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." Thus, by terms borrowed from our bodies, and properties, and circumstances, God describes himself, and among other instances of that kind, there is one where he employs the very term here applied to Jesus in my text. For the purpose of teaching us that he is before all, that he is the cause and the end of all, with such condescension as a father shows to his little children, he takes the Greek alphabet, and selecting the first and the last letters, as those within which all else are included, he says, "I am Alpha and Omega, *the beginning* and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

He must be God who is almighty. He must be God who is, and was, and is to come; and since "the beginning" is another title applied in that passage to the same august, and infinite, and adorable Being, by applying it to our Lord, Paul pronounces him divine, and around the head which was once pillowed on a woman's bosom, and once bowed in death upon a cross, he throws a halo of uncreated glory. A man worshipped in heaven; a babe adored on earth; the infant's advent sung by angels; sable night throwing off her gloom, and breaking into splendour above his manger-cradle; one whom many well remembered, as if it were but yesterday, carried in Mary's arms or playing with the boys of Nazareth, now claiming to be older than Abraham; his step on the water lighter than a shadow's, his voice on the waters mighty as God's; the prompt obedience of unruly elements; the sullen submission of reluctant devils, as they retired back, and farther back before that single man, like a broken band retreating in the face of an overwhelming force; the hand that was nailed to the cross freely dispensing crowns of glory, and opening the gates of heaven to a dying thief; the earth trembling with horror, and the sun turned mourner because they were murdering their Lord; the adoring admiration of the great apostle who, contemplating an infant cradled in a manger, a man hanging on a bloody tree, a tomb and its lonely tenant, found heaven too low, and hell too shallow, and space too short, to set forth the greatness of the love that gave the Saviour to die for us; these marvels, otherwise utterly inexplicable, have their key in "the mystery of godliness;" Jesus Christ was "God manifest in the flesh." What a precious truth! The blood of Calvary being, as Paul calls it, the blood of God, may well have virtue in it to cleanse from all sin, so that though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

II. This term, "the beginning," expresses Christ's relation to his church and people.

The beginning of a tree is the seed it springs from. The giant oak had its origin in the acorn. From that dry, hard shell, sprung the noble growth that laughed at the storm, in the course of time covered broad acres with its ample shade, and built the ship that, with wings spread to the wind, flies under a Bethel flag, to bear the gospel to heathen lands, or, opening her ports, rushes on the bloody slave-ship, and fights the battle of humanity on the rolling deep. Now, as a seed, Jesus Christ was one apparently of little promise. According to the prophet, he was, in the eyes of men, a root out of a dry ground. He was all his lifetime despised and rejected; yet out of him has grown that church which shall bear the blessings of salvation to the ends of the earth, and pursue her bloodless, victorious course, till continents and islands have knelt at his feet. All the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Christ.

A house, again, begins at the foundation. The first stone laid is the foundation stone. That may be sunk in a deep, dark hole; yet though it lies there, unseen and forgotten by the thoughtless, it is the stability and support of all the superincumbent structure. And when the nails were drawn, and the mangled body of our Lord was lowered from the cross, and received into women's arms, and borne without any funeral pomp by a few sincere mourners to the lonesome tomb, and, amid sobs, and groans, and tears, and bitter griefs, laid in that dark sepulchre, then did God in heaven say, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. Yes, it was a tried stone. He had been tried by men and devils, and by his Father too; hunger, and thirst, and suffering, and death, had tried him. Since then the foundation has often been tried, in great temptations, and sore afflictions, and fierce assaults of the Evil One; winds have blown, and rains have fallen, and rivers have swelled, and heavy floods have rolled, but the man who has believed in Christ, and the hopes that have rested on his finished work, have stood firm and unmoved. Saints triumphing over temptation, martyrs singing in prison, believers dying in peace, devils baffled, hell defeated, have made good Christ's words, Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The author of our faith, the founder of his church, Christ began it ere the world began, or sun or stars shone in heaven. He provided for the fall before the event happened. He had the life-boat on the beach before the bark was stranded, or launched, or even built. Not eighteen hundred years ago, when the cross rose with its bleeding victim high above the heads of a crowd on Calvary, not the hour of the Fall, when God descended into the garden to comfort our parents, and crush, if not then the head, the hopes of the serpent, but eternal ages before these events saw the beginning of the church of Christ. He began it in the councils of eternity, when, standing up before his Father to say, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God, he offered himself a substitute and a sacrifice for men. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

The author then, and, when he died on Calvary, the finisher of our faith.

III. Jesus is "the beginning" of salvation in every individual believer.

He is "all our salvation." We owe everything to Christ. Whatever was the instrument employed in our conversion, whether a silent book, or a solemn providence, or a living preacher, it was his grace that began what had a beginning, but, thanks be to God, never shall have an end; the health that never sickens, the life that never dies, the glory that never fades. By his Spirit convincing us of sin, and revealing himself to us as a willing and all-sufficient Saviour, he began it at conversion; he carries it on through sanctification; and he crowns it in glory. The preacher was a man but drawing a bow at a venture. Jesus! it was thine eye that aimed the shaft, and thy strength which bent the bow that day the arrow stuck quivering in our heart. When our sins were carrying us out to our burial, it was thou that didst stop the bier, and with thy touch impartedst life. Brought by the prayers of others to the grave, where we lay corrupting in our sins, it was thy voice that pierced the ear of death, and brought us alive from the dead. Having none in heaven or on earth but thee, thou hast been all in all to us. In thy birth our hopes were born, in thy death our fears expired, in thy sepulchre our guilt was buried, the sufferings of thy cross were natal pangs, and to us and millions more thy grave has been the pregnant womb of life.

The "beginning," and therefore "the author," Jesus is the finisher of our faith. He does no half work, half saving or half sanctifying a man. Trust him, that where he has begun a good work, he will carry it on to the end. What would become of us if he did not? Blessed Lord! but that thy hand sustained me, how often had hell received me? but that thy faithfulness did not fail with my faith, but that thy goodness did not ebb with my gratitude, but that thy love of me did not wane with my love of thee, how often had I perished? How often have I been as nearly damned as Simon was nearly drowned in the deep waters and stormy waves of Galilee? How great, O Lord, has been thy mercy towards me; thou hast brought up my soul from the lowest hell!

We know that men have turned this doctrine to a bad purpose, just as to a bad purpose many turn the best gifts of providence. But it is no reason why the children should be starved that dogs sometimes steal their meat. The man who presumes on this doctrine to continue in sin because grace abounds, affords in his very presumption the plainest, strongest evidence that he never has been converted—just as the falling star by falling proves that it never was a true star, never was a thing of heaven, though it seemed to shoot through the stellar regions, and by a train of light illumined its dusky path, never was other than an atmospheric meteor, "of the earth, earthy." The best, indeed, in a sense, will fall, and do often fall; but he who rises from his falls, whose sins are the occasions of bitter sorrow, whose peace is the child, and whose faith is the parent of love, can, I believe, no more drop out of Christ, than a true, God-made star, can drop out of heaven. He will keep that which God has committed to him. He will perfect that which concerneth them.

How can it be otherwise? He is ever near to them that call upon him, and that never can happen to them which befell a child who had heedlessly wandered from its mother's side. She sought her darling all round her cottage, and wherever he had been wont to play. Alarmed, she rushed into the gloomy forest that grew by her moorland home; she called; in frantic terror, she shrieked his name. No answer; he was a lost child. A child lost! the tidings spread like wildfire through the hamlet; and some leaving business, others pleasure, the country-side rose for the search; and through that weary night, glen and mountain, moor and den, rung with the shouts, and gleamed with the lights of anxious searchers. The coming morn ushered in the Sabbath, but brought no rest. Believing that mercy was better than sacrifice, and that had He who came to seek and save the lost been there, He would have led the way, they resumed the search; and for the first time the feet of piety turned from the house of God. But all in vain. Now hope was burning low even in the mother's breast, and the stoutest hearts were sinking, when a woman, guided doubtless by God to the spot, heard a feeble cry, a low moaning sound. One thrill of joy, one bounding spring, and there, with its dying face to heaven, lay the poor lost child before her on the cold ground, its young life ebbing fast, as it faintly cried, "Mother, mother!" It was saved, yet how nearly lost; and nearly lost because it had wandered far from a mother's ear and a mother's eye. Its danger is never ours. From Christ no darkness hides, no distance parts us; and through whatever dangers his people have to pass, though they but turn the brink of the pit, the very edge of hell, though their escapes are so narrow that the righteous scarcely are saved, he will make good his words, I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.

The First-born from the Dead.

The first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.—COLOSSIANS i. 18.

DEATH is an event we do not attempt to shut out of view. Here, our city has its cemeteries, which, by their taste and beauty, rather attract than repel a visit. There, where hoary trees fling their shadow on graves, stands the rural church, within whose humbled walls the living worship in closest neighborhood with the dead; a type of heaven, the approach to that sanctuary is by a path which passes through the realms of death. When death occurs among us, friends and neighbors are invited to the funeral; and in broad day the sad procession, following the nodding hearse, wends slowly along our most public streets. The spot that holds our dead we sometimes visit, and always regard as a sort of sacred ground; there a monument is raised to record their virtues; or a willow, with its weeping branches flung over the grave, expresses our grief; or a pine or laurel, standing there in evergreen beauty when frosty blasts have stripped the woods, symbolises the hopes of the living, and the immortality of the dead; our hand plants some sweet flowers, which though they shed their blossoms as our hopes were shed, and hide their heads awhile beneath the turf, spring up again to remind us how the dear ones who there sleep in Jesus are awaiting the resurrection of the just.

I have read of a tribe of savages that have very different customs. They bury their dead in secret, by the hands of unconcerned officials. No grassy mound, no memorial stone guides the poor mother's steps to the quiet corner where her infant lies. The grave is levelled with the soil; and afterwards, as some to forget their loss drive the world and its pleasures over their hearts, a herd of cattle is driven over and over the ground, till every trace of the burial has been obliterated by their hoofs. Anxious to forget death and its inconsolable griefs, these heathen resent any allusion to the dead. You may not speak of them. In a mother's hearing, name, however tenderly, her lost one, recall a dead father to the memory of his son, and there is no injury which they feel more deeply. From the thought of the dead their hearts recoil.

How strange! How unnatural! No, not unnatural. Benighted heathen, their grief has none of the alleviations which are balm to our wounds, none of the hopes that bear us up beneath a weight of sorrows. Their dead are sweet flowers withered, never to revive; joys gone, never to return. To remember them is to keep open a rankling wound, and preserve the memory of a loss which was bitter to feel and still is bitter to think of; a loss which brought only grief to the living, and no gain to the dead. To me, says Paul, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. They know nothing of this; nothing of the hopes that associate our dead in Christ with sinless souls, and sunny skies, and shining angels, and songs seraphic, and crowns of glory, and harps of gold. Memory is only a curse, from which they seek relief by removing the picture from the chambers of their imagery, or turning its face to the wall.

Without the hope of a better world, apart from mercy, pardon, grace and glory, through the blood of Jesus Christ, what were death to me, or to any, but an object of unutterable gloom? I shrink from seeing it. With all the strong consolations of the gospel, ah! what sight so bitter as to see a loved one dying; our sweet flower withering day by day on its drooping stalk; the cold shadow of death, like an eclipse, creeping over the whole horizon of our being, till, one hope after another disappearing, the case assuming a gloomier and yet gloomier aspect, we are left, but for the inner light of the Spirit and God's truth, in blank despair? As we hang over the dying couch or cradle, how it wrings the heart to see the imploring look turned on us, and we can give no relief; to hear the low moanings, and we cannot still them; and when the struggle is long protracted, to be forced to pray that God in mercy would drop the curtain, and close this dreadful scene. There is no event so terrible as death. There is no sound so awful as that last sigh. There is no coldness feels so chill to the hand as the brow or face of the dead. And when, in place of one full once of light, and life, and love, our arms embrace a pale, clay-cold corpse, when, for the smiling face, childhood's pattering feet, and prattling tongue, and bright sparkling eye, and merry laughter, we have nothing but that solemn countenance, that rigid form, that marble brow, that cold clammy hand, that silent tenant of a lonesome room, beside whom we tread with noiseless step, and, as if afraid to disturb their slumbers, speak in hushed whispers, and with bated breath, verily death needs all the consolations that religion can administer.

Apart from the hopes of a better and a brighter world, to one's self, also, what is death but an unutterable evil? What weary hours, and days, and nights, are often preludes to the closing scene. And that scene! what terrible sufferings may we have to endure, and others have to witness in our dying chamber? How may they resemble those appalling struggles amid which the dying man seemed to us to be doing battle with an invisible enemy, who had him by the throat, and whom he was trying, but in vain trying, to throw off? Steps he into a palace or a hovel, Death, without any question the King of Terrors, presents the features of a tremendous curse in that ghastly countenance, the fixed and filmy eyes, the restless head, the wild tossing of the arms, the hands that, as if they sought something to cling to, clutch the bed-clothes, the muttering lips, the wandering mind, the deep insensibility, the heavy breathing, the awful pauses, and that long-drawn, shivering sigh, which closes the scene, and seems to say, as the departing spirit, ere it quit the bounds of time, casts one last look on all that is past and gone, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon pronounces a living dog to be better than a dead lion; and I say, better be a living beggar than a dead king. I love life; I love to walk abroad and see the sun shine, and hear the birds sing, and wander by rippling stream, or sit on banks where sweet flowers grow; I love the homes where I look on happy faces smiling, receive welcome greetings, and hear kind voices speaking. To have all these shut out, to be nailed up in a narrow coffin, to be buried in the dull earth, to moulder amid silence into dust, to be forgotten, and, when fires are cheerily blazing on our own hearth, and songs and laughter by their merry ring tell how broken hearts are sound again, to think of ourselves lying cold, and lonely, and joyless in the tomb, are not things we love to dwell on. Our Lord himself shrank from death ; he cast himself at his Father's feet, to cry in an agony, If it be possible let this cup pass from me. And who, unless some unhappy wretch, courts death, wishes to die, to lie down among those naked skulls, and the grim unsocial tenants of the grave ? Faith herself turns away from the thought. Standing on the edge of the grave, she turns her eye upward ; and, leaving the poor body to worms and dust, she wings her flight heavenward, follows the spirit to the realms of bliss, and loves to think of the dead as living ; as not dead ; as standing before the Lamb with crowns of glory, and bending on us looks of love and kindness from their celestial seats. Yes ; death needs all the comforts that religion can summon to our aid.

Nor has Christ left his people comfortless. By his life, and death, and resurrection, he has fulfilled the high expectations of prophets ; nor, bold as it is, is the language too lofty which Hosea puts into his mouth, O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction. The death of Death, the life of the grave and greatest of all its tenants, he has conquered the conqueror of kings ; he has broken the prison, he has bound the jailer, he has seized the keys, and he comes in the fullness of time to set all his imprisoned people free. They are prisoners of hope. He will bring back his banished. He has entered into glory as their forerunner, or, as my text calls him, " the first-born from the dead."

Let us consider in what respects Christ is " the first-born from the dead."

I. He is so in the dignity of his person. He is the greatest who ever entered, or shall ever leave, the gates of death.

In one of the boldest flights of fancy, Isaiah sets forth the destruction of the Babylonian monarchy. He sees a mighty king descending into the grave, breaking its awful silence. His footsteps disturb the dead; they raise themselves in their coffins; and as he enters alone the dark domain of a monarch mightier than himself, on his ear fall the voices of kings long buried, muttering, Art thou also become as we? Art thou become like unto us? When we die we sink into the grave like raindrops into the sea, as snowflakes alight on the water; for however man's death may for a little agitate some living circles, it never stirs the dead. But Jesus Christ being the Lord of glory, the fountain of life, the creator of the sun that darkened over his cross, and of the moon that shed her silver light on his lonely sepulchre, his descent into the tomb was an event which might well be set forth in the prophet's magnificent imagery. I can fancy all the dead astonished at his coming; and that, as he enters the domain of the grave, a spirit-voice breaks its silence, saying, "It is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?"

Fancy some great, good, brave, patriotic monarch, bound in chains, and after being ignominiously paraded through the public streets, thrust into the common gaol, to exchange the glory of a palace for the gloom and shame of a dungeon. How would such an event impress the spectators with the mutability of earthly greatness! And were such a reverse of fortune borne out of love to his subjects, how would it win their admiration, how would it move their love as well as pity! Yet, what were such an event to that which, unnoticed by the world, is passing in yonder garden, where by the waning light of day two men and a group of weeping women, amid silence broken only by sobs and soft whispers, are laying a dead body on a hurriedly prepared bed of spices? Nor man's, nor angel's eyes, had ever looked on a scene so wonderful. Solomon had said, Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? but what would Solomon have said, had he seen the young child in the manger, still more, had he seen the lonely tenant of that tomb? Whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, here a sepulchre holds. Repulsive to the eye as are these skulls and mouldering bones, the grave boasts of having held some nights within its chambers one who, while he honored lowly cottages with his visits, was greater than any whom palaces have opened to receive. The language of the prophet is literally accomplished. The regions of death were moved at Jesus' coming. Never before, never since, has the opening of these gates awakened those within. They sleep too sound for that. How unmoved do parents lie when their children are laid by their side; the mother never flings her arms about the dear babe that death restores to her bosom; and to the cry of room, room, the unmannerly beggar stirs not to make way for a king. They neither revere the good, nor respect the great. They feel no love there; and, unlike the burst of joy, the rushing into each other's embrace, the smiles, the tears, when the loving and long parted meet again on earth, how cold and dreary the reunions of the grave, these silent meetings of the dead!

But Christ's descent into the tomb roused death from its deepest apathy. That awoke those who are heedless of the shock of earthquakes. The dead were moved at his coming. The graves were opened. The inspired poet's fancy became a literal fact. And, waiting for him to lead the way, many dead saints left the tomb on the morning of his resurrection; in them he led captivity captive, and was followed by the strangest train that ever graced the triumph of a returning conqueror. If we should certainly conclude that the jailer has been beaten and bound, when we see the captives pouring from the open prison, how plainly do those yawning tombs, untouched by mortal hand, and these dead men, who return alive to Jerusalem, show that the long reign of death is drawing to a close, and the oldest of earth's kingdoms tottering to its fall. Their escape plainly proved that death had received from Christ's hand, what no other hand could deal, a mortal blow. Thus, all the circumstances that signalized alike our Lord's descent into the tomb and his triumphant resurrection, proclaim him, as with the sound of royal trumpets, the first and greatest of the dead.

II. Because he rose by his own power.

There is no sensibility in the dead. The eyelids your fingers have closed open no more to the light of day. The morning raises up all within the house to a fresh sense of bereavement: without, it wakens business, pleasure, the music of skies and groves; but it wakens not the sleeper in that locked and lonely chamber, who, once dreading to be left alone, is alike fearless now of darkness and of solitude.

There is no passion in the dead. The sight of them affects us, not our grief and sorrow them; as well kiss marble as that icy brow; our tears will flow, nor does Christ forbid them; but their hottest gushes thaw not the fountains that death has frozen.

There is no power in the dead. The cold hand you lift drops; the poor body lies as it is laid. And, so soon as that last, long sigh is drawn, though the color still lingers on the cheek, and the limbs are not yet stiffened into cold rigidity, they can rise no more than the ashes on the hearth can resume their original form, and change into what once they were, a branch green with leaves, and decked with fragrant blossoms. The dead can do nothing to help themselves. In all cases but Christ's resurrection, life was not resumed, but restored; it was given, not taken back. At the grave of Lazarus it proceeded from Christ's lips, wafted on the air to the ear of death. At the gate of Nain it passed from Christ's hand, streaming, like the electric fluid, into the body of the widow's son. And there, where Elisha lies stretched on the Shunammite's dead boy, his eyes on the child's eyes, his hands on the child's hands, his lips on the child's lips, that prostrate, praying man forms a connecting medium by which life flows out of Him in whom is its fulness, to fill a vessel that death has emptied. And, at the last day, we ourselves shall not awake, but be wakened, roused from sleep by the trump of God, as, blown by an angel's breath, it sounds throughout the world, echoing in the deepest caves of ocean, and rending the marble of the tomb.

Now look at our Lord's resurrection. He rose in the silent night; no hand at the door, no voice in his ear, no rough touch awaking him. Other watchers than Pilate's soldiers stood by the sepulchre; but these angels whom it well became to keep guard at this dead man's chamber door, beyond opening it, beyond rolling away the stone, beyond looking on with wondering eyes, took no part in the scenes of that eventful morning. The hour sounds; the appointed time arrives. Having slept out his sleep, Jesus stirs; he awakes of his own accord; he rises by his own power; and arranging, or leaving attending angels to arrange, the linen clothes, he walks out on the dewy ground, beneath the starry sky, to turn grief into the greatest joy, and hail the breaking of the brightest morn that ever rose on this guilty world. That open empty tomb assures us of a day when ours too shall be as empty. Having raised himself, he has power to raise his people. Panic-stricken soldiers flying the scene, and Mary rising from his blessed feet to haste to the city, to rush through the streets, to burst in among the disciples, and with a voice of joy to cry, He is risen, He is risen! prove this was no vain brag or boast, "I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

III. Because he is the only one who rose never to die again.

The child of the Shunammite, the daughter of the ruler, the widow of Nain's son Lazarus, and all the saints who followed our Lord from the grave, were prisoners on parole. The grave took them bound to return. Dear-bought honors theirs! While Enoch and Elijah never tasted death, these twice drank the bitter cup; with one cradle, each had two coffins; one birth, but two burials; and thus, that God might be glorified, suffering pains from which obscurer saints have been exempt, they in part fulfilled the noble saying of that dauntless martyr, who declared his love for Christ to be such, that if he had as many lives as he had gray hairs on his head, he would lay them all down for him. These honored ones were out on bail. After a while they retraced their steps; and, now lying in dusty death, they wait the summons of the resurrection. But Jesus waits to summon, not to be summoned. The grave holds them, but heaven holds him. For heaven, as well as hell, was moved at his coming; and there, saints adoring, angels worshipping at his feet, in the very body which was stretched on the cross and laid in the sepulchre for us, he fills his Father's throne. The King of kings and Lord of lords is "He who liveth and was dead."

IV. Because he has taken precedence of his people, who are all to rise from their graves to glory.

It is better for me, if I am a poor man standing in need of royal favors, to have a friend at court than in my own humble cottage; and it is better for us that Christ is with his Father in heaven than with his people on earth. It is expedient for you, he said, that I go away. He has gone to prepare a place for us; and while his Spirit has come down to take care of the business of his church on earth, he looks after and watches over its affairs in heaven. He had work to do which could not otherwise be done. He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. So, after three days' unbroken rest, he rose to sleep no more, and be the first-born of the dead. Apart from that, precedence was his right. It belonged to him in the very nature of things. The king precedes his train; the head rises first out of pit or grave, afterwards the body and its members; the foundation stone is laid first, afterwards the stones of the superstructure; the elder brother breaks first from a mother's womb, afterwards the children of whom he is forerunner.

It is as the prelude of our own resurrection, that Christ's is to us the object of the greatest satisfaction and joy. In these cast-off grave clothes, in that linen shroud and napkin, there is more to draw our eyes, and fix our interest, and move our admiration, than in the jewelled robes or royal purple of the greatest monarch of earth. That empty tomb, roughly hewn in the rock, is a greater sight than Egypt's mighty pyramids, or the costliest sepulchres that have received the ashes of the proudest kings. How full of meaning is its very emptiness! What good news to us in Mary's disappointment! What joys flow to us in these women's tears! Thanks be to God, they could not find him. He is not there. No, Mary! they have not taken away your Lord; no robber has rifled that sacred tomb. See, the dew lies sparkling on the grass, nor feet have brushed it but those of one who has left the grave. He is risen; and, as the first fruits of them that sleep, as the first ripe sheaf that was offered to the Lord, his resurrection is the pledge and promise of a coming harvest. Henceforth the grave holds but a lease of the saints. Because he rose, we shall rise also.

Sweeter to our ear than the full chorus of bright skies and greenwood, are the first notes of the warbler that pipes away the winter, and breaks in on its long, drear silence! And more welcome to our eye than the flush of summer's gayest flowers, is the simple snowdrop that hangs its pure white bell above the dead bare ground. And why? These are the first-born of the year, the forerunners of a crowd to follow. In that group of silver bells that ring in the spring with its joys, and loves, and singing birds, my fancy's eye sees the naked earth clothed in beauty, the streams, like children let loose, dancing, and laughing, and rejoicing in their freedom, bleak winter gone, and nature's annual resurrection. And in that solitary simple note, my fancy hears the carol of larks, wild moor, hillside, and woodlands full of song, and ringing all with music. And in Christ, the first-born, I see the grave giving up its dead; from the depths of the sea, from lonely wilderness and crowded churchyard they come, like the dews of the grass, an innumerable multitude. Risen Lord! we rejoice in thy resurrection. We hail it as the harbinger and blessed pledge of our own. The first to come forth, thou art the elder brother of a family, whose countless numbers the patriarch saw in the dust of the desert, whose holy beauty he saw shining in the bright stars of heaven.

The first-born! This spoils the grave of its horrors, changing the tomb into a capacious womb that death is daily filling with the germs of life. The first fruits! This explains why men called the churchyard, as once they did, God's acre. Looking at these grassy mounds in the light of that expression, the eye of faith sees it change into a field sown with the seeds of immortality. Blessed field! What flowers shall spring there! What a harvest shall be gathered there! In the neighboring fields "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" but here how great the difference between what is sown amid mourners' tears, and what shall be reaped amid angels' joys; between the poor body we restore to the earth, and the noble form that shall spring from its ashes. Who saw the rolling waves stand up a rocky wall; who saw the water of Cana flow out rich purple wine; who saw Lazarus's festering corpse, with health glowing on its cheek, and its arms enfolding sisters ready to faint with joy, saw nothing to match the change the grave shall work on these mouldering bones. Sown in corruption, they shall rise in incorruption, mortal putting on immortality. How beautiful they shall be! Never more shall hoary time write age on a wrinkled brow. The whole terrible troop of diseases cast with sin into hell, the saints shall possess unfading beauty, and enjoy a perpetual youth; a pure soul shall be mated with a worthy partner in a perfect body, and an angel form shall lodge an angel mind. There shall be no more death, nor sighing, nor sorrow, for there shall be no more sin.

If we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, what reconciling views of death does this open up to us? Why don't we think better of death, and oftener of death? No doubt his hand is rough, and his voice is gruff, and, rudely seizing us by the throat, as if he were an officer and we were the prisoners of justice, he has none of the courtly manners of Eleazer when he went to bring his bride home to Isaac; yet why should those things make us overlook so much the glittering crown he brings in his grisly hand, the message he brings us to come away home. We should be much happier if we familiarised our minds with this event, and trained ourselves to think of death more as glory than as death, as our return to our Father and our Father's house, as going home to be with Jesus and the saints; or, if you will have death in, as the death of all sin and sorrow, as the death of Death. To a child of God, what are its pains but the pangs of birth; its battle, but the struggle that precedes the victory; its tossings but the swell and surf that beats on the shores of eternal life; its grave but a bed of peaceful rest, where the bodies of saints sleep out the night that shall fly away for ever before the glories of a resurrection morn. I know a churchyard where this is strikingly set forth in the rude sculpturing of a burial stone. Beneath an angel figure, that, with outstretched wings and trumpet at the mouth, blows the resurrection, there lies a naked skull. Beneath the angel, and beside this emblem of mortality, two forms stand; one is the tenant of the grave below, the other it is impossible to mistake, it is the skeleton figure of the King of Terrors. His dart lies on the ground broken in two, and the hand that has dropped it is stretched out over the skull, and held in the grasp of the other figure. Enemies reconciled, the man bravely shakes hands with death, and his whole air and bearing show that they are become sworn friends. As if he had just heard Jesus announcing, I am the resurrection and the life, you seem to hear him saying, O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ.

We shall rise like Him who, in his own resurrection, and in the church he has redeemed with his own blood, and in the universe he created by his own power, has the preëminence, the unchallenged preëminence. Let him have it in our thoughts, our lives, our hearts. Who but he should have it? Holy Spirit! enable us to enthrone in our hearts him whom his Father hath enthroned in the heaven of heavens. Preëminence! Shall we give it to the world that hated him, to the devil that tempted him, to the sins that crucified him? Gracious God, forbid! Let Jesus have the preëminence! Help us, Lord, to love thee best, to serve thee first, to follow thee, leaving all to follow thee. If, in one sense, we cannot say, Whom have I in heaven but thee, because there we may have father and mother, brother and sister, and sweet children whom we loved, and love still, and will rejoice again to embrace, we would say, Thou art the chiefest among ten thousand, thou art altogether lovely. If, in one sense, we cannot say, There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee, we would say, there is none on all the earth that I desire before thee, nor deem equal to thee. Blessed Lord, thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. To thee, as the sun of my firmament, may the moon and stars make obeisance; to thee, as the needle to its pole, may my trembling heart be ever turning; to thee, as the waters seek the ocean, may my desires be ever flowing. Bend every sheaf to Joseph's! Jesus, the best be thine, the honor thine, the glory thine, the kingdom thine. The feast to thee, the fragments to others. This ever be my question, not What can I spare from myself for Christ, but What can I spare from Christ for myself? Be thou preferred above my chief joy. In all things have thou the preëminence!

The Fullness.

It pleased the Father, that in Him should all fullness dwell.—
COLOSSIANS i. 19.

OUR happiness depends in a very small degree upon what is external to us. Its springs lie deep within; like those waters that, warm in winter and cold in summer, have their fountains bordered with evergreen grass. Yet, how common it is to think otherwise! Hence the keen pursuit of pleasure, lovers' sighs, war's fierce ambition, the student's patient labor as he feeds his midnight lamp with the oil of life, the panting race for riches, the desperate struggles some make to keep themselves from sinking into poverty, and the toil and trouble others endure, to say nothing of the sins which these may alike commit, to rise in the world, as it is called—to keep a better table, to wear a better dress, to live in a better house than satisfied their humble, but happier parents. These paths, crowded and beaten down though they be by the feet of thousands who are treading on each other's heels, never yet conducted any man to happiness. Never. It lies in another direction. Whatever be his condition, be he poor or rich, pining on a sick bed or with health glowing on his cheek, to be married or to be hanged to-morrow "Blessed," or, as we should say, Happy, "is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

The way to happiness does not lie in attempting to bring our circumstances up to our minds, but our minds down to our circumstances. Many birds wear a finer coat than the lark, nor is there any that dwells in a lowlier home; yet which of the feathered songsters soars so high, or sings so merrily, or teaches man so well how to leave the day's cares and labors for the bosom of his family, as when, neither envying the peacock his splendid plumage, nor the proud eagle her lofty realm, it drops singing into its grassy nest, to caress its young, and with its wings to shield them from the cold dews of night? To indulge an unsanctified and insatiable ambition, to attempt to bring our circumstances up to our minds, is to fill a sieve with water, or the grave with dead, or the sea with rivers. The passions that in such a case seek gratification, are like that wretched drunkard's thirst; they burn the fiercer for indulgence, and crave for more the more they get. It is often difficult, I grant, to bring our minds down to our circumstances, but he attempts not a difficult, but an impossible thing, who attempts to bring his circumstances up to the height of his ambition. Nature, says the old adage, is contented with little, grace with less, lust with nothing. And ours be the happiness of him who, content with less than little, pleased with whatever pleases the Father, careful for nothing, thankful for anything, prayerful in everything, can say with Paul, I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Before directing your attention to the fullness that is in Christ, let me embrace the opportunity which the expression offers of exhorting you.

I. To be pleased with whatever pleases God.

I have read of an Italian who had learned that difficult lesson so well, that all who witnessed his magnanimity, under the most adverse fortunes, stood astonished. He recalled to men's minds the grand saying of an old heathen, that a good man struggling with adversity was a sight for the gods to look at. It was not that his natural temper was too sweet to be soured or too phlegmatic to be moved; nor was it that, like a cold-blooded animal, he did not feel the iron when it entered his soul. No. He felt it keenly, and bore it bravely; and the secret of his tranquil, heroic patience lay in these four things. First, he said, I look within me, then without me, afterwards beneath me, and last of all, I look above me.

First, he looked within him; and what saw he there? Corruption, guilt, so much unworthiness, as led him to conclude that he deserved no good thing at the hand of God; and that, therefore, whatever blessings his calamities had left to him, were more than he had any right to expect. We write our blessings on the water, but our afflictions on the rock. Those are forgot, these are remembered; and yet, if we turn away our eyes from our trials, and look back on our lives and in upon our hearts, how would that check each rising rebellious murmur? Gratitude would temper our grief; and though we might continue to mourn, we should say with David, I will sing of mercy and judgment?

Next, he looked without him, and there he saw, what you all may see, many more severely tried than himself; thousands in point of merit not more unworthy, yet in point of circumstances much more unhappy.

Would it not help to clear away the vapours, and rebuke the discontent, and improve the temper of some grumblers among us, were they now and then to visit the sad abodes of wretchedness and poverty? It would certainly teach them how thankful they ought to be that they are not as many are, and how thankful many would be to be as they are. Have I not seen many a poor wretch in this world who would gladly change places with those of you that are most weary of your burdens, and almost weary of your life. How has it reconciled us to the discomforts of a cold, blustering storm on land, to think of the poor seamen who were tossing on the deep in dread of shipwreck, or hanging on by the shrouds, or whelmed in the ocean, their last prayer washed from their lips, their cries for help drowned in the roar of breakers. When we lay stretched on a bed of sickness, with kind faces around us, angels, as it were, ministering to our wants, it has helped to reconcile us to the weary pillow to think of them who, far from home, lay bleeding on the battle-field, none near to raise their drooping head, or to answer their dying cry of "water, water!" And when death, unwelcome visitor, entered our home, ah! the one coffin felt less heavy, when, looking on sweet ones left, we thought of dwellings that the spoiler had, or had all but desolated. Such a thought has calmed the troubled breast, and said to murmuring passions, Peace, be still. It is with its potent spell that in this humble cottage a pious peasant approaches a mother who, wringing her hands, hangs in wild, frantic, terrible grief, over the body of her dead babe; by the wildness of her passion, as a vehement wind beats down the sea, calming the grief of others. Laying her hand kindly on her shoulder, she says, with eyes full of tears, and a voice trembling with emotion, "Hush, Mary; you have but one pair of empty little shoes to look on. Be you thankful. I have six of them." And, when most severely tried, and all God's billows seem to be going over us, besides feeling that we are visited with far less than our iniquities deserve, we have only to look abroad to see that our afflictions are fewer than those which many others suffer.

He looked next beneath him. And there, to his fancy's eye, lay his grave; a green grassy mound, six feet of earth! How foolish it seemed to repine over the loss of broad lands, when so small a portion of this earth was all he soon would need, and all, though stretched out at his full length, he could occupy! That man blunts the keen edge of misfortune, who meets its stroke with the thought, that when it does its worst, it cannot strip him so bare as death shall the most prosperous and envied of men? Adversity, at the worst, but takes time by the forelock, and, by a few brief years, anticipates the hand of the greatest spoiler, inexorable death. We came into the world naked infants, and we shall go out of it as naked. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The men of fortune shall not carry away a penny of their gains, nor the men of fame so much as one leaf of their laurel crowns. When life's play in all its acts is over, and the curtain drops, and the lights are put out, and the stage is deserted, its kings, queens, priests, soldiers, peasants, statesmen, dropping their distinctive characters, must all return to one common level. There is one event to all. And let us remember that it shall be with us as with those actors on the stage whom men applaud, not because of the parts they play, but of the way in which they play them. Well done from God, well done from Christ, well done from the tongues of ten thousand angels, shall crown the life of a good servant, but not the life of a bad sovereign. God has no respect for persons, but will reward every man, not according to his place, but according to the way he filled it. He shall reward every man according to his work.

He looked last of all above him, and saw his home in heaven. And how should that glorious prospect sustain us under our severest trials! To that refuge our thoughts may always fly ; and as there is no pit so deep but it has that opening over head, though it may be dark below and all around, it is always bright above us. Let the world reel and shake, let banks break, let sudden changes whelm affluence into the lowest depths of poverty, let convulsion succeed convulsion, till the stateliest fabrics and firmest fortunes are hurled into the dust, how blessed at such a time to know that heaven is sure. No tempests sweep its sea of glass. Up there it is calm when it is stormy here ; up there it is clear when it is cloudy here ; up there it is day when it is darkness here ; nor are those realms of bliss any more affected by the events of earth, than are the stars of the firmament by the earthquakes that shake our world, or the thunders that shake our skies. By considerations like these we should strengthen our minds, and give them that firmness of texture which shall preserve us from devouring cares, as solid, close-grained oak is preserved from those insects that eat out the heart of softer woods. Let God give his blessing to such thoughts, and they will enable a Christian man to meet evil as the mountain crag looks out on the approaching storm.

Yet the Italian's explanation of his equanimity under afflictions to which all of us are exposed, and against which, therefore, we do well to be fortified, does not bring out the grandest secret of a calm, resigned, happy spirit; the secret of a patriarch's unparalleled patience and of a prophet's dauntless courage. That lies not so much in looking within, or looking without, in dropping our eye on the grave, or raising it to the crown, as in looking to God. The brightest light that falls on our trials issues from his throne. That changed the whole aspect of Job's afflictions, and hence, his well-known exclamation, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. And what also but a sight of God inspired the courage with which the prophet eyed the approach of misfortune, defying it as a man on a rock defies the swelling billows of an angry sea. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Extravagant as that may sound in the ears of some, it is the language of a calm, sober, solid faith. For what in reason should hinder him who sees in God a Father, and believes that all events proceed from his hand, and are managed by his wisdom, and are prompted by his love, from kissing the rod, and saying, Father, not my will, but thine be done; from taking the cup and draining it to the bitterest dregs. We have perfect confidence in his wisdom and in his love; and we only do him the justice which we would expect from our own children when we believe that he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, nor ever chastens but in love. His was a noble saying who, when his crops were rotting in flooded fields, and ruin stared him from the scowling heavens, and other men cursed the weather, on being asked his reason for saying that it pleased him, replied, It pleases God to send it, and whatever pleases him pleases me. That sounds like an echo of the old prophet's voice; and we are ready to envy a man whose faith could triumph over such great misfortunes. Yet why should we not lie as calmly in the arms of God's providence as we lay in infancy on a mother's breast? Having an ever-living, an everlasting, an ever-loving father in God, how may we welcome all providences; and, drawing some good from every evil, as the bee extracts honey even from poisoned flowers, how may we say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" Sweetly submissive to the will of God, shall it not fare with us as with the pliant reeds that love the hollows and fringe the margin of the lake, and bending to the blast, not resisting it, raise their heads anew, unharmed by the storm that has snapped the mountain pine, and rent the hearts of oak asunder? The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Let us now consider that which, while it pleased God, will certainly please all his people,

II. The fullness that is in Christ.

Within the palace, but without the throne-room of Shushan, Queen Esther stands. They who enter the king's presence unsummoned do it at the peril of their life; and resolved in a good cause to dare the penalty, she stands there with her jewelled foot upon the grave. A noble spectacle! not so much for her unrivalled beauty, still less for the splendour of her apparel, as for the resolution to venture life, and either save her nation or perish in the attempt. In her blooming youth, in the admiration of the court, in the affections of her husband, in her lofty rank, in her queenly honours, she has everything to make life attractive. Hers is a golden cup; and it is foaming of pleasures to the brim. But her mind is made up to die; and so, with a silent prayer, and "if I perish, I perish," on her lips, she passes in, and now stands mute and pallid, yet calm and resolute outside the ring of nobles, to hear her doom. Nor has she to endure the agony of a long suspense. Her fate, which seems to tremble in the balance, is soon determined. No sooner does the monarch catch sight of the beautiful woman, and brave and good as beautiful, whom he had raised from slavery to share his bed and throne, than her apprehensions vanish. The clouds break; and she finds, as we often do with Christ, that her fears have wronged her Lord. Instantly his hand stretches out the golden sceptre; the business of the court is stopped; the queen, the queen! divides the crowd of nobles; and up that brilliant lane she walks in majesty and in charms that outvie her gems, to hear the blessed words, What wilt thou, Queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

What wilt thou, Queen Esther? is but an echo of the voice which faith catches from the lips of Jesus; and the whole scene presents but a dim, imperfect image of that which heaven presents when the gate rolls open, and angels and archangels making way for him, a believer enters with his petitions. Was that beautiful woman once a slave? So was he. In her royal marriage was lowliness allied to majesty? So it is in his union by faith with Jesus Christ. And as to her r apparel, the diadem, the cloth of gold bedecked with sparkling gems, in which her maids have attired their mistress, why, in the righteousness that clothes, and the graces of the Spirit that adorn him, the believer wears a robe, which wins the admiration, not of men's, but angels' eyes, and shines even amid the glories of a city whose gates are made of pearls, and whose streets are paved with gold. To the half of his kingdom, the Persian promised whatever his queen might ask; and generous, right-royal as was his offer, it helps us by its very meanness, as a molehill at the foot of a mountain, as a taper's feeble, yellow flame held up against the blazing sun, to form some estimate of the boundless grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Half his kingdom! He offers nothing by halves. His promise is illimitable. All mine is thine. Confining his generosity neither to kingdoms, nor continents, nor worlds, nor heaven itself, he lays the whole universe at a poor sinner's feet. Away then with fears and cares! There is nothing we need that we shall not get, nothing we can ask that we shall not receive. It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. Transferring divine wealth, if I may so speak, to our account in the bank of heaven, and giving us an unlimited credit there, Jesus says, All things, whatsoever ye ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.

In regard to Christ's fullness, I remark—

1. That there is all fullness of mercy to pardon in him.

Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor, so, says Solomon, doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor. Such great mischief can little things do. One small leak will sink the biggest ship that ever sailed the ocean; one bad link in the chain she rides by, and parting from her anchor, she is hurled on the horrid reef or driven before the fury of the tempest; and even one little wedge left carelessly on the slips arrests her progress when the signal is given, and eager crowds are waiting to cheer the launch, and the bosom of the sea is swelling to receive her into its arms. And had there the smallest doubt expressed in the Bible about the fullness of pardoning mercy, had it not been made clear as noon-day that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, from sins as well of the deepest as of the lightest dye, what a stumbling-block would that have been! I believe that it would have arrested the steps of thousands now happy in Christ, or now safe in heaven, as they went to throw themselves at his feet and cry, Lord, save us, we perish.

But there is no such doubt. A herald of the cross, I stand here in my master's name to proclaim a universal amnesty. When the last gun is fired, and pardon is proclaimed in reconquered provinces, is it not always marked by some notable exceptions? When the sword of war is sheathed, the sword of justice is drawn, only to be returned to the scabbard after it is filled with blood. Men say that they need not look for mercy in the hour of retribution, who wreaked ruthless vengeance on helpless women, nor had pity on sweet tender babes. But from the pardon of redeeming mercy there are none excepted, unless those, who, by refusing to accept it, except themselves. Are you unjust? Christ Jesus died, the just for the unjust. Are you sinners? He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Are you the vilest of the vile? He never lifted his foot, when he was on this earth, to spurn the guiltiest away. He pitied whom others spurned; he received whom others rejected; he loved whom others loathed. Let the vilest, meanest, most wretched outcasts, know that they have a friend in him. A mother's door may be shut against them, but not his. It was his glory then, and it is his glory still, to be reproached as the friend of sinners. He faced contumely to save them; he endured death to save them. And be you groaning under a load of cares or guilt, of sins or sorrows, kind and gracious Lord! he says, Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, "which also leaned on his breast at supper," and lingered by his cross, and was entrusted with the care of his mother, and more than any of the others enjoyed his master's intimacy and knew his mind, says, not as one who balances his language, and carefully selects his words, lest he should compromise and commit his master too far, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous:" adding, "and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole* world." The whole world! ah! some would say, that is dangerous language. It is God's language. It binds a zone of mercy around the world, and perish the hand that would narrow it by a hair's breadth. Beneath his grace in Christ, as beneath that ample sky, there is room enough for all the men and women in the wide world. None shall be damned but they who damn themselves. What were it but to make God a liar, should we doubt that our sins can be pardoned, ay, and shall be pardoned, if we seek their forgiveness? Within its widest shores the vast ocean has its bounds, and so has the far-travelling sun within his orbit; but this pardon is confined within no limits of time, or age, or guilt, or class, or character, and is clogged with no conditions but that you accept it.

One might fancy that now all are certain to be saved. Who will not accept of it? Offer a starving man bread, he will take it; offer a poor man money, he will take it; offer a sick man health, he will take it; offer an ambitious man honor, he will take it; offer a lifeboat in the wreck, a pardon at the gallows, oh! how gladly he will take them. Salvation, which is the one thing needful, is the only thing man will not accept. He will stoop to pick up a piece of gold out of the mire, but he will not rise out of the mire to receive a crown from heaven. What folly! What infatuation! May God by his Spirit empty our hearts of pride, and take away the heart of unbelief! Vain here is the help of man. Arise, O Lord, and plead the cause that is thine own. Break the spell of sin, and help us to say with the man of old, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!

2. There is all fullness of grace to sanctify in Christ.

"My leanness! my leanness!" is a lamentation which God's people, as well as the old prophet, have often used in mourning over their spiritual condition. It may be very low, very sad; presenting the contrast of a soul famished, and a body luxuriously fed; increase of earthly, but a diminution of sacred joys; at the year's end more money in the bank, but less grace in the heart; the tide of worldly fame flowing, and the tide of God's favor ebbing; gardens, and orchards, and woodlands, and the fields of nature, green, gay, and beautiful, but barrenness of soul within; graces withering, prayers dull, faith weak, love cold, desires feeble, spiritual appetite failing; much to alarm the saint, and send him to his knees crying, My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word.

But why is it, why should it be so? Why burns the virgins' lamp with such a flickering flame? Why runs the stream of grace so small, shrunk to the size of a summer brook? Why are the best of us no better, no holier, no happier, than we are? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? No. The supplies are not exhausted, nor is the fountain empty; nor is our Father fallen into poverty, that his children are so scantily supplied, and have to go about meanly begging a share of the world's enjoyments. It is easy to know why many poor children in this city come to have misery stamped on their young faces, and look as if they had never smiled in this world, nor found this world smiling on them; a tyrant rules at home, harsh, stern, cruel, forbidding. Hapless creatures, they wander shoeless and shivering on our frosty streets, and with hunger in their hollow cheeks, and beggary hung on their backs, they hold out their skinny hands for charity; their father is poor, or dead, or, worse than dead, the base slave of a most damning vice, a drunkard, from whose imperious voice they fly, whose reeling step they tremble to hear. But what have God's children to do with unhappy looks?

God is love. Fury is not in me, saith the Lord. With him is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. What do you wish or want? Go tell it to your Father. They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Can he who justified not sanctify? Can he who enlisted us under his holy banner not provide munitions of war enough to secure, though there may be a hard fight for it, the final victory? Can he who led the march out of Egypt not beat down our foes, and conduct our triumphant way through a thousand dangers and over a thousand difficulties on to the promised land? Oh, yes; there is all efficiency and sufficiency in Jesus Christ to crown the work of grace, and to complete what he has begun. There is his Holy Spirit to sanctify you; there are stores of grace which, like the widow's barrel that grew no emptier for all the meals it furnished, will appear the fuller the more you draw on them. As with an arch, the grace of God stands the firmer, the more weight you lay on it; its sufficiency, at least, will be the more evident; the more clearly you will see the truth of the promise, My grace is sufficient for thee. With the well ever full and ever flowing, our vessels need never be empty. Whether, therefore, you want more faith, more purity of heart or peace of mind, more light or love, a humbler or a holier spirit, a calmer or a tenderer conscience, a livelier sense of Christ's excellences or of your own unworthiness, more tears for Christ's feet or more honors for his head, fear not to draw, to hope, to ask, too much. No earthly fortune will stand daily visits to the bank, but this will. You may ask too little, you cannot ask too much; you may go too seldom, you cannot go too often, to the throne; for in Jesus dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

III. There is a constant supply of pardoning and sanctifying grace in Christ.

It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness *dwell;* dwell, not come and go, like a wayfaring man who tarrieth but a night, who is with us to-day, and away to-morrow; not like the shallow, noisy, treacherous brook that fails, when most needed, in heat of summer, but like this deep-seated spring, that rising silently though affluently at the mountain's foot, and having unseen communication with its exhaustless supplies, is ever flowing over its grassy margin, equally unaffected by the long droughts that dry the wells, and the frosts that pave the neighboring lake with ice. So fail the joys of earth ; so flow, supplied by the fullness that is in Christ, the pleasures and the peace of piety. It cannot be otherwise. If a man love me, says Jesus, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

I have read how, in the burning desert, the skeletons of unhappy travellers, all withered and white, are found, not only on the way to the fountain, but lying grim and ghastly on its banks, with their skulls stretched over its very margin. Panting, faint, their tongue cleaving to the roof of their mouth, ready to fill a cup with gold for its fill of water, they press on to the well, steering their course by the tall palms that stand full of hope above the glaring sands. Already, in fond anticipation, they drink where others had been saved. They reach it. Alas! sad sight for the dim eyes of fainting men, the well is dry. With stony horror in their looks, how they gaze into the empty basin, or fight with man and beast for some muddy drops that but exasperate their thirst. The desert reels around them. Hope expires. Some cursing, some praying, they sink, and themselves expire. And by and by the sky darkens, lightnings flash, loud thunders roll, the rain pours down, and, fed by the showers, the treacherous waters rise to play in mockery with long fair tresses, and kiss the pale lips of death.

But yonder, where the cross stands up high to mark the fountain of the Saviour's blood, and heaven's sanctifying grace, no dead souls lie. Once a Golgotha, Calvary has ceased to be a place of skulls. Where men went once to die, they go now to live; and to none that ever went there to seek pardon, and peace, and holiness, did God ever say, Seek ye me in vain. There are times when the peace of God's people, always like a river, is like one in flood, overflowing its margin, and rolling its mighty current between bank and brae. There are times when the righteousness of God's people, always like the waves of the sea, seems like the tide at the stream, as, swelling beyond its ordinary bounds, it floats the boats and ships that lie highest, driest on the beach. But at all times and seasons, faith and prayer find fullness of mercy to pardon, and of grace to sanctify, in Jesus Christ. The supply is inexhaustible.

Mountains have been exhausted of their gold, mines of their diamonds, and the depths of ocean of their pearly gems. The demand has emptied the supply. Over once busy scenes, silence and solitude now reign; the caverns ring no longer to the miner's hammer, nor is the song of the pearl-fisher heard upon the deep. But the riches of grace are inexhaustible. All that have gone before us have not made them less, and we shall make them no less to those who follow us. When they have supplied the wants of unborn millions, the last of Adam's race, that lonely man, over whose head the sun is dying, beneath whose feet the earth is reeling, shall stand by as full a fountain as this day invites you to drink and live, to wash and be clean.

I have found it an interesting thing to stand on the edge of a noble rolling river, and to think, that although it has been flowing on for six thousand years, watering the fields, and slaking the thirst of a hundred generations, it shows no sign of waste or want; and when I have watched the rise of the sun, as he shot above the crest of the mountain, or in a sky draped with golden curtains, sprang up from his ocean bed, I have wondered to think that he has melted the snows of so many winters, and renewed the verdure of so many springs, and painted the flowers of so many summers, and ripened the golden harvests of so many autumns, and yet shines as brilliant as ever, his eye not dim, nor his natural strength abated, nor his floods of light less full for centuries of boundless profusion. Yet what are these but images of the fullness that is in Christ? Let that feed your hopes, and cheer your hearts, and brighten your faith, and send you away this day happy and rejoicing. For, when judgment flames have licked up that flowing stream, and the light of that glorious sun shall be quenched in darkness or veiled in the smoke of a burning world, the fullness that is in Christ shall flow on throughout eternity in the bliss of the redeemed. Blessed Saviour, Image of God, divine Redeemer! in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. What thou hast gone to heaven to prepare, may we be called up at death to enjoy!

The Reconciler.

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.—COLOSSIANS i. 20.

THE salutations that pass between man and man differ in different countries. Boaz, for example, goes out to see his reapers. The field is flashing with sickles; the tall corn is falling to the sweep of young men's arms, and to maidens' songs; and gleaning on behind them come widows, and orphans, and little children, all made welcome to share the bounties of providence and the fullness of a good man's cup. A busy, joyous, crowded harvest-field, where brown labor piles her healthful task in a bright autumn day, is one of the most pleasant scenes a man can look on; though now-a-days we not only miss the gleaners, but also that kindly, pious intercourse between master and servants which lent a peculiar charm to Bethlehem's harvests. Boaz moves on from band to band, and, as each stops to do him reverence, he says, The Lord be with you, and, meet reply to such pious and courteous language, they answer, The Lord bless thee. Without undervaluing the progress which the world has made since then, in arts and science, in wealth and the more general diffusion of the pleasures and comforts of life, surely it has not been all gain. It is difficult to look back without some regret on those happy days when children played, and no ragged orphans pined, in the streets, when manners were simple, and people were guileless, and the rich were kind to the poor, and the poor did not scowl upon the rich, and nobody was trodden on or neglected, and no wide yawning gulf separated the highest from the lowest classes of the community.

The ordinary salutation of the East, however, was one of peace. It is so still. Seated on his fiery steed and armed to the teeth, the Bedouin careers along the desert. Catching, away in the haze of the burning sands, a form similarly mounted and similarly armed approaching him, he is instantly on the alert; for life is a precarious possession among these wild sons of freedom. His long spear drops to the level; and grasping it in his sinewy hand he presses forward, till the black eyes that glance out from the folds of his shawl recognise in the stranger one of a friendly tribe, between whom and him there is no quarrel, no question of blood to settle. So, for the sun is hot, and it is far to their tents, like two ships in mid-ocean, they pass; they pull no reign, but sweep on, with a "Salem Aleikum," Peace be unto you. Like their flowing attire, the black tents of Kedar, the torch procession at their marriages, this salutation is one of the many stereotyped habits of the East. Throughout the Holy Land and the neighboring countries, the modern traveller hears the old salutation, fresh and unchanged, as if it were but yesterday that David was a fugitive in the wilderness of Paran, and sent this message to that rude, surly, niggard churl, with whom Abigail, "a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance," was unhappily mated, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.

Beautiful as this custom is, like the fragrant wall-flower that springs from the mouldering ruin it adorns, it sprung from an unhappy condition of society. Why peace? Because frequent wars, sudden interruptions of hostile tribes, made the people of these lands sigh for peace. Hence their habit of expressing their kindly feelings to each other in the wish that they might have peace; a blessing which many had not, and which they who had might not long enjoy. War does not take us unawares. We see the black storm-cloud gathering before it bursts; and by prudent policy we may avert it, or, if it be inevitable, prepare bravely to meet it. But this course of humanity, this dreadful scourge fell on the villages and cities of these countries with the suddenness of the sea-squall that strikes the ship, and, ere time is found to reef a sail or lower a boat, throws her on her beam-ends, and sends her, crew and cargo, foundering into the deep. Look at the case of Job; camels, cattle, sheep and servants gone, he is reduced in one short day from affluence to the most abject poverty. One morning the sun rises in peace on Abraham's tents; and ere noon or nightfall they are ringing with cries to the rescue; in wild confusion children are crying, women are weeping, and men are arming; there is hot haste to mount and away; and, with two hundred retainers at his back, Abraham scours the country, raising it as he goes, to deliver Lot and his family from the hand of the spoilers. Three days ago, David and his followers left Ziklag, sweet peace brooding over the quiet scene; and where is Ziklag on their return? They come back, but not to happy homes; they are silent, a mass of smoking ruins; no wife hastens to embrace her husband, no child runs to climb its father's knee; the red-handed spoiler has been there; their mountain nest has been harried; and, appalled at the desolation, these stout-hearted men burst into frantic grief, weeping till, as the Bible says, they can weep no more. Looking at these scenes, it is easy to understand how the most kind and common greeting in such countries was Peace be unto you.

Though the practice would ill accord with our conventional manners, that have often more of art than of nature, I think, considering the day, the place, the purpose of the assembly, it were a beautiful and appropriate thing, when ministers and people meet in the house of God, to meet after the manner of Boaz and his people; the minister, on appearing in the pulpit, saying The Lord be with you, and the people responding The Lord bless thee. Our vine and fig-tree are good laws, a free government, a home around which the sea throws her protecting arms, and a stout people who fear God and honor the king. Thus preserved from the fears of those countries, we have not learned their fashions. Yet when we ransack these sunny lands for gay flowers to adorn our gardens, why should we not transplant some of their beautiful habits? While others introduce offensive novelties into the pulpit, as if the gospel required such wretched aids, he would follow the footsteps, and give utterance to the spirit of Jesus, who, boldly breaking the ice of our cold customs, should meet his people on the morning of the blessed Sabbath with his master's salutation, Peace be unto you.

With these words our Lord, on returning from the grave, accosted his disciples. Nor on his lips were they mere words of course, the ordinary courtesies of life. How well did they suit the occasion! The battle of salvation has been fought out, and a great victory won; and in that salutation Jesus, his own herald, announces the news to an anxious church. Passing into that upper room which holds it, passing through the barred and bolted door which protects it, he suddenly appears among them. He has fulfilled the anthem with which angels sang his advent, and ushered him into this distracted, guilty world. Though he had to recal her from heaven, where she had fled in alarm at the Fall, or, rather, had to seek her in the gloomy retreats of death, he brings back sweet holy Peace to earth. And hastening to tell them the good news, the glad tidings of great joy, he proclaims it in the words, Peace be unto you. He shows them his hands, with the nail-marks there; he uncovers his side with the spear-scar there; and when the disciples are gazing through streaming eyes on these affecting love-tokens, his heart swells, fills, overflows with tenderness, and, as if he could never tire of saying it, nor they of hearing it, he bends over them to say again and again, Peace be unto you.

Suppose that, instead of descending, like dews, in those gracious but silent and unseen influences of the Spirit, that people should pray for and preachers should trust to, our Lord were to come in person, appear in a visible form, and reveal his glory to every eye, how would he address us? I believe that he would bring from heaven the very salutation which he brought from the grave. As he looked around on those he had purchased with his blood, and renewed by his grace, I can fancy him breaking the deep silence, and stilling the heart-throbbings, and dissipating the sudden terrors which a vision might produce, with the old gracious words, Peace be unto you. And what a load would that take off some hearts; what a calm, like his voice on Galilee, would it impart to some troubled minds; what a gracious answer would it bring to some earnest prayers! To hear his own voice, however, to behold his blessed face, to be assured of forgiveness from his own lips, these are joys reserved for heaven. Yet with strong, though childlike faith in exercise, the next best thing is to be assured, as we are assured in my text, that peace has been made, and that God, for the purpose of reconciling us to himself, has made it through the blood of Christ's cross.

I. The text implies that by nature man is at enmity with God.

So says the apostle Paul. Nor is it possible to lay down that doctrine more clearly or more strongly than he does in these remarkable words, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." He does not say that it is in a state of enmity. Not at all; for states and frames may undergo change, and are variable as wind or weather. As God is love, so the carnal mind is enmity; this being so much the nature, essence, element of its existence, that if you took away the enmity, it would cease to be; enmity being the breath of its life, the very marrow of its bones. From such a view of the heart, from so hideous a picture some start back; they hesitate to believe it, while others plainly, indignantly deny it. Pointing us to a beautiful, sweet, angel-like child, as with open brow and unclouded face, it bends at a mother's knee, and, lifting its little hands to heaven, repeats from her gentle lips its evening prayer, they ask who can fancy that creature to be enmity against God? True. But who would fancy, as it twines its arms around a mother's neck, and kisses her, and sings itself asleep on her loving bosom, that the day can ever come when it will stab that bosom, and these little hands will plant wrongs sharper than a dagger in her bleeding heart? Yet that happens. And many things else happen that you would never fancy. The purple bells of the nightshade change into poisonous berries; the cold, dull flint sends out sparks of burning fire; the viper that lay quiet in the "bundle of sticks" is aroused by the heat, and leaps from the flames to fasten on an apostle's hand.

Sins, like seeds, lie dormant till circumstances call them into active existence. Aware of that, Satan knew right well what he was saying when, in reply to God's praise of his servant Job, he said with a sneer, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." And so the good man had done, but for restraining grace. What a burst of pent-up passion, like the fiery eruption of a volcano, breaks the seven days' awful silence, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived; let that day be darkness. Why died I not from the womb? Why did the knees prevent me? Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; which rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they can find the grave?" Here Job curses the day that he was born; and he who curses God's providence has to take but another step, and he curses God himself. But that a divine arm had borne his burden, but that a divine hand curbed his passions, that woman, raging like a bear bereaved of her whelps, would have had no occasion to reproach him for his tame submission. No. He had vented curses, if not as loud, perhaps, like the river where it flows, sullen and black, more deep than hers; and, standing side by side over a grave big with bodies and with griefs, they had raised their hands together against the heavens, and flung back their life at him who had embittered it. But for the grace of God Job had been no pattern of patience. And let the grace, which both sustained and restrained him, be withdrawn from any of us, and our natural enmity and corruption would break out after such a fashion as would astonish ourselves, shock the ears of the public, and lead many to hold up their hands to exclaim, Lord, what is man!

This enmity is a doctrine into which the believer does not need to be reasoned. He feels it. He reads its evidence elsewhere than in the Bible; he reads it in his own heart. He, who knows himself, knows it. Breaking out like old sores, the sins of heart, and speech, and conduct, by which it makes itself manifest, are his daily pain, and fear, and grief. Other soldiers have easy times of peace, when swords rust idly in their sheaths, and the trumpet sounds but for parade. Not he. There is never a day but he has to fight this enmity to the holy will and sovereign ways of God. His life is a long battle and a hard battle; and, like a soldier tired of war, though true to his colors, he often wishes that it were over, as, overcome of evil, and vexed with himself, he throws himself on his knees to cry, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me, Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

This enmity is a thing, whose existence is taken for granted in the language of my text; for what need can there be to make peace between God and man if they are friends already? Does not the making peace between two nations imply that they had been standing to each other in the relation of antagonists, not of allies? Not friends required to be reconciled, but foes. When, with tabard and trumpet, royal heralds proclaim the peace, and cannon roar, and church-bells ring, and bonfires blaze, and bright illuminations turn night into day, in that darkened house, where the shouts of the crowd fall heavy on a widow's heart, who clasps her children in her arms, or where a father and mother are weeping over a bloody lock of their soldier boy's hair, they know too well that war went before the peace, a tempest of blood and carnage before that dear-bought calm. When, therefore, my text says that peace was made, it implies that, though unequal antagonists, more unequally matched than if a presumptuous worm, which I could crush with one stamp of my foot, should raise itself up to bar my path and to contend with me, God and man stood face to face, front to front, in opposition the one to the other. I pray the sinner to think of his madness in contending with God. The issue is not doubtful yonder, where the chaff and the whirlwind meet, or the blast and the autumn leaves meet, or the potsherd and the potter meet; where the unmasted, rudderless wreck meets the mountain-billow that lifts her up, and whirls her crashing on the reef, around which next moment there float but some broken timbers. Nor is it doubtful here. Throw down, I pray you, the weapons of your rebellion; down on your knees; yield yourselves to the love of Christ; kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way; for, who has an arm like God, or who can thunder with a voice like his? Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but woe to the man that striveth with his Maker.

Animated by fierce despair, man would fight on, and fight it out to the last. If God is only set before me in the attitude and act of cursing, I believe I should curse back again. Such is our nature; and he is as ignorant of philosophy as of the gospel, who expects to conquer my enmity by the terrors of the law, or by any other argument than the love of God. But does God appear as reciprocating our enmity, as the enemy of man? No; not even when he condemns him. To suppose so were a great mistake, were to do base wrong to a gracious God. I know that some have painted him in dark, and gloomy, and repulsive colors, imputing to the Supreme Being their own vengeful and malignant passions; but that terrible spectre, who has a better claim than Death to be called the King of Terrors, is not the God of the Bible, is not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not He in whose name I call on the sinner to come to the throne of grace, and throw himself with confidence at the feet of mercy. I cannot deny that God condemns, but I deny that he ever condemns willingly. He does not hate the sinner, though he hates his sins. He loves him; he loves you. And if that judge is not considered the enemy of the pale, guilty, trembling wretch, on whose doomed, sunken head, with a voice choked by emotion, and eyes dropping tears that leave no stain on the judge's ermine, reluctant he pronounces the terrible sentence of death, is God to be considered the enemy even of him whom, after years of long suffering, he condemns to perdition? No. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The man who is damned has been his own enemy. And should such, which God forbid, be your awful fate, I warn you that it will be the bitterest thought of hell, that God sought to be reconciled to you and you madly refused. Give me a voice loud enough to reach the ends of the earth, and I would raise it to proclaim that God is not willing that any man in that wide world should perish, but that all should come to him and live. Do men perish? Hear the reason, Ye will not come to me that ye might have life. Would you be saved? listen to these gracious words, Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

II. God desires to be reconciled to his enemies.

He did me wrong; if there are faults on both sides, he was the first in the transgression; therefore, if we are to be reconciled, he, not I, must be the first to make advances! Such, if you ever undertook the too often thankless, and sometimes perilous office of a mediator between friends whom differences had estranged, you know to be the law which man lays down. Man stands upon his dignity. He talks loftily of his honour, and what he calls justice to himself and the interests of society. The injured says of the injurer, and each generally thinks not himself but the other such, He is to come to me, I am not to go to him. Indignant at the proposal of anything that wounds his pride, he spurns it away, asking, Am I to stand at his door in the humble attitude of a suppliant, to appear as if I were the injurer, not the injured? You may tell him that he who conquers himself, wins the victory; you may tell him, that he who ruleth his own spirit is greater than he who taketh a city; you may tell him that it is noble to make the first advances. No, he says, I will not meet him even half way; let him come and acknowledge his offence; I will not refuse my hand, but he must ask it; I am willing to bury the quarrel, but he must dig the grave.

Strange terms for those to insist on who know the grace of God, and how our own great debts are forgiven! If God had so dealt with us, we should have gone to hell, every one of us. Yet such are commonly the lowest, easiest terms on which man agrees to treat with man. And I have known a mother sternly refuse to grant a daughter the forgiveness she asked even on her knees. Come with me into that woman's cottage when she has received her summons to a bar, where she herself, as well as all of us, will need forgiveness. Her last hour is come; and though in the dim light of a candle which we hold to her face, it looks firm and stern even in a dying hour, we think surely she will relent now, and afford some hope, however faint, that the spirit that forgives goes to be forgiven. Putting kind neighbours aside, I bend over that ghastly form, and in the awful presence of death, put her to the trial. There is no relenting. It is no time for speaking smooth things; a soul is at stake; and in half an hour she will be in hell or heaven. She has been plainly told, that unless she forgives, she cannot be forgiven. Jesus hanging for sinners on the cross, and praying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do; God entreating the guilty to return to his bosom, and stooping in love over his bitterest enemies, these are set before her, but in vain. The tree falls as it leans, as well as lies as it falls. God may forgive, not she. And, when sent away, as it were, by a voice saying, She is joined to her idols, let her alone, I left these horrors, and stepping out into the calm night, raised my eyes to the spangled sky, how pleasant it was to think of the contrast between our father there and that iron mother, and how natural it was to exclaim with David, Let me fall into the hand of the Lord ; for his mercies are great ; and let me not fall into the hand of man. Many a star studded the night's dark vault, but I thought none looked so bright and beautiful as the blessed promise, Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.

My ways are not as your ways, neither are my thoughts as your thoughts, saith the Lord. How strikingly and blessedly is that illustrated in the peace restored between God and man ! Who is the first to seek reconciliation here ? Does God stand upon his dignity, his honour, the justice of the case ? If ever any might, it was He. But did the great God sit aloft on his imperial throne, surrounded by holy angels, saying, Let these sinners come to me ; the offence was theirs, and the humiliation must be all their own ? No. He takes the humiliation to himself, and might be supposed to be the injurer, not the injured. Veiling his majesty, and leaving heaven to seek our door, he stands there, knocks there, waits there ; nay, with an infinite kindness and condescension, he goes down, as it were, on his knees, beseeching us, as if it were a favour done to him, to be reconciled. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did *beseech* you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." How hard are your hearts, if ye can resist such love!

Some talk as if we were saved just because Christ paid our debt, representing God's share in the transaction as little else than that of a severe, stern, unrelenting creditor, who takes no interest in his imprisoned debtor beyond letting him out when the surety has taken up the bond. Is this true? Is it fair to God? True? It is utterly false. Salvation flows from a higher source than Calvary. It has its fountain, not in the cross of the incarnate Son, but in the bosom of the eternal Father. These hoar hills with their time-furrowed brows, that ocean which bears on its face no mark of age, those morning stars which sang together when our world was born, these old heavens, are not so old as the love of God. It dates from eternity. Eternal ages before the Law was given, or broken, or satisfied, he loved us. The central truth of the Bible, that on which I lay the greatest stress and rest my strongest hopes, is this, that God does not love us because Christ died for us, but that Christ died for us because God loved us. I do not disparage the work of Christ; far be such a thought from me. Yet Christ himself is the gift of divine love, the divine expression of our Father's desire to be reconciled. The Lord of angels hanging on a mother's bosom, the Creator of heaven and earth bending to a humble task, the judge of all standing accused in the place of common felons, the Son of his Father's love nailed amid derision to an ignominious cross, death rudely seizing him, the dark grave receiving him, we owe to the love of God. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. What love do we owe him who so loved us!

III. To make our peace with God, Jesus Christ laid down his life.

I have seen one who had roughly reckoned up the cost of the gems, the rubies, pearls, emeralds, diamonds, that studded the golden arches of an earthly crown, stand astonished at its value. And yet, in point either of cost or brilliancy, what is that to the crown any ransomed beggar or saved harlot wears in heaven? Imperial diadems are nothing to the crown of glory. In the sanctuary balances a saint weighs heavier than a sovereign. And there is more value in the crown of a redeemed infant, one of these little ones, than in all the glory of all the holy angels. A word made them. He said, and it was done; heaven was full of them. But to make a saint, he who never left his throne to make or save an angel, descended on our world in the form of a servant, and, more amazing still, hung dead on a cross in the form of a sinner. The price of our pardon was nothing less than what the apostle calls the blood of God. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. To restore peace, and open up a way of reconciliation, to save us from the perdition of that bottomless pit, Jesus took our sins upon him, and poured out his soul unto death.

An ancient historian tells us that, at the siege of Babylon, Darius condemned to the cross three thousand captives. Another relates how, when Alexander inflicted long-threatened vengeance on Tyre, he crucified two thousand prisoners, and that crosses stood on her bloody shores thicker than ship masts in her crowded harbor. And when the Roman let fly his eagles against Jerusalem, Titus, measuring out to the Jews the measure they had meted to Jesus, gave them crosses enough, "good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over." A spectator of the scenes, the dreadful, tragic scenes, amid which Judah's sun set in blood for ever, tells that wood was wanting for crosses, and crosses were wanting for bodies. Yet had Babylon's, Tyre's, Jerusalem's, all these crosses been raised to save you, and on each cross of that forest, not a man, but a dying angel hung, had all heaven been crucified, here is greater love, a greater spectacle. God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Purchasing our peace at such a price, God has done more for you and me than for all the universe besides. Creator of earth and heaven, he threw suns from his hand like sparks shot from the fire, and, as a potter turns off clay vessels from his wheel, he fashioned the worlds, and sent them away spinning in their orbits; but here is a greater work. If Nehemiah's words were ever specially appropriate to any lips, it was to those that maintained unbroken silence amid the taunts and insults of the cross. When they cried, If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, I do not know that our Lord so much as felt the insult, that in that hour it troubled him. It might be but a pebble flung into a storm-tossed ocean, adding nothing to the turmoil, nor so much as felt amid the roar and swell of breakers. It might be but the sting of a miserable insect on the cheek of one who bestrides in battle a fallen friend, his shield ringing with blows, and his flashing blade sweeping down the foe around him. It might be but a feather added to that mountain burden of sin and wrath beneath which Christ's great soul was bowing; yet, had it pleased our dying Lord to answer the taunt, I can fancy him bending from the cross to say, "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down;" I have a world to save, therefore I cannot save myself; without shedding of blood is no remission. Poor scoffer! no cross for me, no crown for thee.

Well may we say with Moses, I will turn aside, and see this great sight. What spectacle so wonderful, so affecting? Behold, how he loved us! Around that cross let faith fling her eager, joyful arms. Embrace it. Oh! clasp it with more than a lover's ardor; in life and death, cling to it like a drowning man, whom the waves cannot tear from his hold.

In making our peace with God, Christ had a great work to do. It is finished; and ours, like his, closes not save with life. We may sometimes think of an aged Christian as one seated on the bank of Jordan in the serene evening of a holy life, waiting the summons, looking back on the world without a regret, and forward into eternity without the shadow of a fear. We fancy him, by the eye of faith, piercing the thick mists that hang over death's dark flood, and as he descries the "shining ones" walking on the other shore, we fancy him stretching out his eager arms and crying, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!" But the picture is more beautiful than true. In working out their salvation with fear and trembling, in carrying forward, through the help of the Holy Spirit, the work of sanctification, God's people will feel the need of watching and working to the very end. The corn shakes when it is ripe; the fruit drops when it is mellow; the Christian dies when his work is done. I see him, as a soldier, dying in harness, fighting on to the very last gasp; as a servant, he may be found, up to the very hour of his Master's coming, putting the house in order. Though the more work done now, the less there is to do at a less suitable time, it occasionally happens that the death-bed of the believer is the scene of his hardest fight, and of Satan's fiercest temptations. Nowhere has the roaring of the lion sounded more dreadful than in the valley of the shadow of death. And it is sometimes with sin as with the monster of the deep, when to the cry, "Stern all," the men who have buried their lances in its ample sides, seize the oars, and pull rapidly out of the sweep of that tremendous tail that beats the ocean till it sounds afar, and churns the blood-stained waves into crimson foam. Men of undoubted piety have found sin's dying to be sin's hardest struggles. It happens with the kingdom of heaven as with a city the violent take by force; the hardest fighting may be in the breach, the battle may rage fiercest where the city is entered, and just when the prize is to be won.

We can leave the cares of our death to God; our business is with present duty. Our work is not finished, while with some of us it may be little more than begun. And I may address the most advanced and aged Christian, in God's words to Joshua, Thou art old and well stricken in years, and yet there is much land to be possessed. Sin has still more or less power over you, and it should have none; your corruptions have suffered a mortal wound, but they are not dead; your affections rise upward to heaven, yet how much are they held back by the things earth; though your heart turns to Christ, like the compass needle to the pole, how easily is it disturbed, how tremblingly it points to him; your spirit has wings, yet how short are its flights, and how often, like a half-fledged eaglet has it to return to its nest on the Rock of Ages; your soul is a garden where Christ delights to walk when the north and south winds blow, to exhale its spices, yet with many lovely flowers, how many vile weeds grow there. With a great work to do, and little time to do it, and that little most uncertain, there is much need to work, the Spirit aiding, heaven helping us. Work, work while it is called to-day, looking for your rest in heaven. Oh, how far short is our holiness of the holiness of heaven. So much imperfection, so many infirmities cleave to the best of us, that I sometimes think that a change must take place at the moment of death second only to that at the moment of conversion. There is much sin to be cast off, like a slough, with this mortal flesh. Saw we the spirit at its departure, as Elisha saw his ascending master, we might see a mantle of infirmity and imperfection dropped from the chariot that bears it in triumph to the skies. I have thought that there must be a mysterious work done by the Spirit of God in the very hour of death to form the glorious crown and copestone of all his other labors; and that, like the wondrous but lovely plant which blows at midnight, grace comes out in its perfect beauty amid the darkness of the dying hour. How that is done I do not know. It takes one whole summer to ripen the fields of corn, and five hundred years to bring the oak to its full maturity. But He at whose almighty word this earth sprung at once into perfect being, with loaded orchards, and golden harvests, and clustering vines, and stately palms, and giant cedars, man in ripened manhood, and woman in her full-blown charms, is able in the twinkling of an eye, ere our fingers have closed the filmy orbs, or we have stooped to print one fond last kiss on the marble brow, to crown the work his grace began. With him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day. He shall perfect that which concerneth you. He shall bring forth the headstone thereof, with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. Now, therefore, unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen.

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